

Testimony of Jack Morrell

House Education Committee

March 21, 2013

House Bill 2289 - Common Core Standards

I am Jack Morrell from Iola, Kansas. I have taught for 38 years, and I am also certified to be a K-8 principal. I have seen a lot of changes in our education system, programs, and philosophies.

Kansas had one of the best education systems in the U.S. and the world as measured by average ACT scores when compared to other states, and our students have done very well on the TIMMS international test. The operative word is "had".

From my understanding and the research I have undertaken on Common Core, I have listed what I believe to be the facts.

Common Core guidelines and premises were developed at the Governor's conference by the State Chief Education officials in response to the problems and shortcomings of The No Child Left Behind law. The common core principles were not fostered onto the state by the federal government. The states were allowed an exemption to create a better education system to ensure a well-rounded education. This is what the common core is supposed to do.

The real shortcomings of the current law was that students weren't and aren't getting a well- rounded education. Our education system is TEST driven to the point of exclusion of all teaching disciplines except reading and math. If a student cannot meet standards set for these two subjects ON THAT ONE TEST DAY the school is considered a failure. With that in mind the focus in elementary schools is almost exclusive to those two subjects. The time spent during the school day is to the detriment of other classes such as science and social studies. In fact, most of the day is structured to make sure the students meet math and reading standards to the exclusion of all other subject matter. Even at the middle school level, if a student struggles to meet standards they are pulled from electives for remedial work to get extra help.

Another reason for Common Core Standards is the mobility of our society. I personally have had students move to Iola from many other states across the country. Depending on where they came from they may be way behind, on level, or ahead. Notice I didn't say way ahead. That is because we in Iola are usually on grade level of what is supposed to be taught. Students from the Southeast and Southwest USA were generally behind. Other geographic areas were on level or slightly ahead. There is a lot of difference in schools in Kansas. The common core developed by the state Chief Education officers was to alleviate the problem of

students education because they move from state to state. Local control is not a viable options. We live in a global community. We also have had many students move to other states. I would hope they get as good an education there as we give them in Kansas.

We in lola have been working on common core for over two years. I have been working on the standards for technology for the last school year. The technology committee is composed of teachers from every grade level that are technologically savvy, or middle school and high school teachers that are directly involved in teaching tech oriented classes. My wife teaches 2nd grade and has collaborated with 2 other second grade teachers over the past year working to tailor the Common Core standards for language arts to her school district.

On a personal note I have received calls from some of my students who have moved to other states. I always ask them about their classes and what they are learning. In most instances if they moved to states in the south, they said they had already covered most of the material in our Kansas school.

As you can see, there is a need for common core. If not from a national setting, then from school district to school district in KANSAS.

Jack Morrell  
lola, Kansas