

To the Honorable Representative Ron Highland, Chair, Education Committee:

Please consider my following testimony regarding HB 2292, to be submitted orally.

I am currently an engineer, but my first career was as a teacher. As a student teacher, I wanted experience in a poor inner city school, and had the great fortune of working with a wonderful mentor teacher in a school in downtown Oakland, California. This teacher taught me how to use a highly individualized curriculum that treated each student as an individual.

Upon graduating, I taught math on a small Navajo reservation in Ramah, New Mexico for three years, bringing with me the individualized curriculum I learned in Oakland. Students experienced 1.4 years of progress for every year in school, on average, using this curriculum, during the time I was there.

After teaching in New Mexico, I also taught for three years at Father Flanagan's Boys Home, also known as Boys Town, in Omaha, Nebraska. The individualized program was again well-received and successful in my classroom.

Had Common Core been in place at that time, none of the success I saw would have been possible. I would have been required to teach students not according to their needs, but according to the curriculum imposed on them based on their assigned grade level.

In addition, the administrative and testing requirements associated first with No Child Left Behind, and now with Common Core, are estimated to rob teachers of up to two hours per day of classroom and prep time. I never had more than one period a day of scheduled prep, and I know that one extra hour of administrative burden steals not 1/8 of the day, but 100% of the scheduled prep, from a teacher.

The real consequence of this burden is that true classroom innovation happens a lot less often, and students are not given the individual attention they require.

I have also reviewed the Common Core math curriculum for just the first few grades, and have found many examples of objectives that are extremely inappropriate to the age or grade level. I was appalled, for example, to find that the Common Core curriculum actually derides traditional arithmetic skills as being too "mechanical", and instead foists on young Kansas children many age-inappropriate and highly confusing abstract concepts, including offering the associative property of algebra as a partial replacement for traditional arithmetic.

There is a time for these abstract mathematical properties to be introduced, but it is not to first and second graders operating fundamentally in the concrete thinking stage. When this and other abstract concepts are offered too early, it not only wastes time, but it sets students up for failure. Success breeds more success, but curricula that is profoundly age-inappropriate, especially when used at an early age, sets the stage for a tragic and

irreversible pattern of failure, low confidence, and hatred of the subject in general, with failure becoming more and more inevitable at each and every step.

In summary, Common Core standards treat students as all the same, without consideration for their individuality; they treat professional teachers as mere facilitators; and, at least in the subject of mathematics they stand in stark opposition to the most important and basic scientific principles of cognitive development.

Please support HB 2292, for the full repeal of Common Core in Kansas.

Sincerely,

John Axtell
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