

To the Honorable Ron Highland, Chair of the Education Committee,

I understand that HB2292 is coming before you, and my husband and I are supporters of this bill. If you would so indulge me, let me explain how Common Core has impacted our family.

My husband and I have two children, a 7th grader, and a 4th grader. As you can imagine, ensuring a future filled with opportunity and building strong character in our children is our primary goal as parents.

We feel like Common Core has compromised our ability to do that.

First, here's a little history about our children's education thus-far.

From their birth through the school year beginning 2010, our children attended a private Montessori school in El Paso, Texas. After moving back to Kansas in 2011, we enrolled them in the local public school, where they attended both school years of 2011 and 2012.

We were having issues in 2012 with both students. Our older child, our daughter Erin, was considerably ahead of her grade level. She was making straight A's in her classes, yet was falling compared to her state and national peers on the assessment tests. When we brought this to our Principle's attention, we were told (I'll paraphrase) that she simply needed to wait until 8th grade. He believed her downward trajectory would meet with the upward trajectory of her classmates at that point in time. In other words, by 8th grade she would no longer be ahead. Her assessment test decline didn't concern him. This answer, of course, was completely unacceptable to us as parents.

At the same time, our younger child, our son Cayden, had spent a day in In-School Suspension during the school year. Cayden had never had behavioral issues in the past. We had another altercation with the Principle regarding the events surrounding this issue and the future resolution.

Based on our dissatisfaction with the response of the Principle, we decided to remove our children from the school. I took them back to El Paso and re-enrolled them in the Montessori school they had previously been at while my husband stayed in Kansas to maintain the family farm. (The Montessori school went through 6th grade. Our daughter was entering 6th grade, so we were going to utilize that school year in El Paso to allow us time to determine what we would do next.)

I can't stress enough how difficult the decision was to split our family to put the children back into the Montessori school. In addition, this decision came with a \$25,000 price tag.

Meanwhile, the School Board decided not to renew the contract for the Principle. Our family certainly wasn't the only family encountering issues. **The system worked as is was supposed to.**

We returned to Kansas for the 2014 school year and decided to homeschool, which is costing our family thousands of dollars.

So where does Common Core come into play?

First of all, we are still concerned about the implications of Common Core. We are considering putting both children back into public school - we have great teachers and the new Principle seems to be working out fine. Our hesitation now is limited to Common Core, itself.

As we have journeyed down the homeschool path, I am astounded at the amount of homeschool families I'm coming into contact with that have recently decided to homeschool due to their concerns over Common Core.

The concerns seem to fall into three categories:

1. Closest to my family's heart is the concern that a centralized one-size-fits-all approach removes the positive impact that can be effected by local control. As I mentioned previously, in our case, the process worked and the Principle was replaced. Going forward, I believe that without the *restraints* of Common Core, the Board and Principle could have worked with us on determining how we could continue to challenge my children.
2. The loudest concern I seem to be hearing, and a concern I share as well, pertains to Common Core seemingly relegating teachers to something less than teaching utilizing curriculum and methods that are tried and true for them. I suppose it goes back to the same one-size-fits-all approach. However, great teachers can evoke great thinking and a love of learning. As a community concerned about this relegation of teachers, it seems like the methods those teachers employ and the contagious enthusiasm they bring is being stifled by Common Core. There is no greater crime than to remove a child's love of learning, or to remove a teacher's passion for teaching - and it seems that is exactly what is happening.
3. A third argument I'm hearing, an argument that seems quieter than the others but should be shouted from the rooftops and simply repulse our population (in my opinion) pertains to the idea that Common Core is affecting our rights as citizens to privacy as it pertains to data collected on their children. Both the methods of data collection and the purposes of that data collection should strike fear in us all.

Given that, and in reviewing HB2292, I can't help but be in passionate favor of something that will repeal Common Core, return school-related responsibilities to the local communities, control data collection on our children, and allow teachers to simply teach to their highest and best ability.

I realize that HB2292 would not solve all our issues and we Kansans still have a lot of work to do to improve our education system. However, we cannot fix anything while we are shackled with Common Core.

Please consider this plea. I pray that my words have adequately demonstrated how we, as parents, only want what is best for our kids and will sacrifice all in order to achieve that. The strain, financial burden, and indecisiveness that this regulation has place on my family *is not limited to my family*. Common Core has pushed us to difficult decisions in our families that we otherwise would not have made.

Respectfully Submitted,

Trista Fox
16026 5 Road
Plains, Kansas 67869
915.490.6121