

House Education Committee
HB 2292 – A bill regarding K-12 curriculum standards, assessments
and data privacy.

Testimony in Opposition
Rick Doll, Superintendent
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Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the Committee on **HB 2292**, a bill repealing the Common Core.

We live in a world of intended and unintended consequences. In my role as superintendent of schools for the Lawrence school district, I am constantly challenged to make changes that benefit our students. When doing so, I have to be very conscious of how one change to one part of the organization may negatively impact other parts of the organization.

Changing the start time for our high schools may seem like a good idea, for example, but it throws off the entire busing schedule for 20 other schools. Pushing teachers to adopt a new blended learning teaching strategy triggers a shift in our capital outlay priorities so we can purchase needed technology. Changing attitudes about educating ALL students pushes staff outside their comfort zone and can hurt morale. Sometimes the outcomes are worth the unintended consequences. Sometimes they are not. HB 2292 has too many negative unintended consequences.

I do not know the authors of this bill nor do I know their intentions, but I think their intentions focus on the desire to communicate to forces outside the state that “they” do not have a right to determine what is taught or tested in Kansas. Perhaps the intended outcome is to return us to “The Good Old Days” when standards were better and did prepare students for college and careers. We could debate the intended outcomes of this bill, but in my opinion, that is not what’s most important. It is the unintended consequences that cause me great concern.

Here are the unintended consequences as I see them.

- A return to old standards is not better. Our standards need to be more rigorous if we are going to better prepare students for life after high school. Older is not always better.
- Though the new state assessments developed by the University of Kansas were not implemented smoothly last year, they are better and will drive better instruction and deeper learning. These assessments would not be allowed under HB 2292.
- Some students enter our schools without the behaviors necessary to be successful. We need to teach them the appropriate behaviors through character development and social and emotional support. This bill prohibits local school districts from teaching students these skills.
- Our Lawrence secondary students are accustomed to being offered very rigorous courses that prepare them for success in universities in Kansas and across the world. Many times these courses are Advanced Placement courses, which have been tied to the new standards. We would lose more than 30 courses from our offerings as a result of this bill.
- USD 497 serves more than 1,000 students through our virtual school. Many of these students are from traditionally home schooled families. They want to home school their children but with a connection to a solid curriculum and a professional teacher. The curriculum that we use in our virtual school is based on the more rigorous standards.
- Though Lawrence does not use the Lexia Reading or Singapore Math programs, many districts do. Lexia Reading has been endorsed by this Legislature, but it too is linked to the current standards and would not pass muster under this proposed bill.

As I stated earlier it is my assumption that the authors of this bill are protesting the intrusion of outsiders into our business here in Kansas. Quite honestly, this bill, with all of its unintended consequences is doing the exact same thing by imposing negative consequences on local school districts. Our elected boards make decisions around curriculum and programs, ranging from what courses are taught in our secondary schools to character education programs to curriculum resource adoption. For example, in Lawrence, we recently completed a two-year field test of two new Kansas English language arts resources. That process should not be interrupted by HB 2292.

Here's another real truth about this debate. We need to do a better job of preparing our students for college and careers. During the past five years, Lawrence schools have increased our graduation rates by 15 percent and greatly reduced achievement gaps for our students from poverty and our students of color. Part of our success can be attributed to meeting student needs through curriculum aligned to the more rigorous standards.

Kelly Hart is a Lawrence middle school teacher and was a regional semifinalist for Kansas Teacher of the Year. She says that the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards put more emphasis on student responsibility, encouraging students to problem solve and become more competent thinkers and writers. She sees her students becoming less dependent on their teacher because they are learning to solve their own problems, demonstrating creative problem solving and critical thinking skills. These are the life-long skills needed beyond high school. We need to be less concerned about preparing students for the next grade level and more concerned about preparing them for life.

I was born and raised on a farm near Wamego. When I or one of my six siblings would start to solve a problem by lashing out or frantically rushing to judgment, we would be told, "You don't kill a mouse with a shot gun." The collateral damage is just too great.

Even if the intended consequences of HB 2292 are good, the unintended negative consequences are much too great. This bill would literally "gut" our educational programs, placing school districts in the impossible position of making local decisions for students that are in direct conflict with the law.

Please don't use a shot gun to kill a mouse. The unintended consequences – the collateral damage to our students – is far too great.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Rick Doll, Superintendent
Lawrence Public Schools USD 497