



## **THE REGULARS: Local control of school curriculum is better approach**

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Did you know that between 2009 and 2011 the National Governors Association provided the impetus for Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to move forward, with 44 states choosing to adopt them? At that point, the states had not reviewed the content because it hadn't been finalized. Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad recently withdrew Iowa from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (one of two consortia creating Common Core assessment tests); multiple other states have withdrawn from their Assessment Consortium.

Many concerns exist about the new state standards.

Do you believe local control of curriculum is the best method to deliver educational excellence or is government control the better approach? I believe parents are the best judge of what the content of their child's education should be. Did you know federal law and the U.S. Constitution prohibit the federal government from legally controlling education curriculum?

Common Core State Standards is a massive overhauling of the content of education curriculum. Common Core has the effect of controlling the students' worldview. Joseph Califano, secretary of Health, Education and Welfare under President Jimmy Carter, put it best when he said, "National control of curriculum is a form of national control of ideas."

That should be alarming to every parent.

Nationalizing education only reduces the level of achievement. Did we learn anything from No Child Left Behind? According to the American Enterprise Institute, educational performance has flat-lined at a cost of billions of dollars since the creation of the federal Department of Education in 1979. Government-controlled education does not make the most of the student's abilities or allow for individuality. Nor has it improved educational outcomes. In fact, we have gone from first in the world in literacy to 65th in the world. Each school district has challenges unique to them and is best served when the solutions are locally

created. The Cato Institute's research has shown that school choice, the use of vouchers, homeschooling, private schools and charter schools have improved performance.

CCSS is doing away with techniques of teaching that have been successful for generations in reading and math. In fact, the only English language arts (ELA) expert on the validation committee for Common Core Standards was Dr. Sharon Stotsky, and she would not sign off on them. The Heritage Foundation found that Common Core Standards were not research-based and, thus, were experimental. The architects of the ELA and math standards did not include experts in their field. The ELA standards are de-emphasizing American and classical literature and favoring informational texts which are easily politically influenced. Literature has shown to advance analytical thinking, which is required for college-level education.

In CCSS, accelerated math is delayed and, therefore, students are not prepared for STEM careers. They are, instead, being steered toward community colleges, not universities. Ask to see your child's new math assignment. Its methodology hinders math literacy for many and will result in significant student failure. With the new trend of social promotion and less emphasis on grades, parents will not realize that their child is not learning until it is too late.

Another concern with Common Core State Standards is that it requires schools keep track of students from pre-school through college, tracking students on 400 different data points, such as religious preference, parents' income level, test scores and behavioral issues.

If Common Core is allowed to stand, curriculum will be based on the Common Core State Standards. Tests for college, such as SAT and ACT, will be developed based on this curriculum and students not taught this curriculum will, therefore, have difficulty passing the college entrance exams. Local districts would have little influence into curriculum if they prove detrimental to the student. Another disturbing fact is the federal government tying school funding to the acceptance of these standards, forcing school districts to buy into an otherwise unacceptable program.

It is fair to say that there has been an effort to dumb down American students. Ask any college professor or employer if our students are coming out of high school more prepared for life or less prepared. I believe they would all say less prepared. In fact, colleges now have to put freshmen in remedial classes before they are ready to take a normal freshman schedule.

Finally, parents, you need to be vigilant and do your homework. Read the textbooks. Is this material satisfactory to you? If not, tell your school board and your elected officials. You are your child's best advocate.