



## **South Dakota Education Board to Reevaluate Common Core Curriculum**

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The South Dakota State Board of Education has announced it will begin a review of the state's curriculum standards for government schools later in 2016.

The current standards are based on Common Core, a national initiative popularized by the Obama administration through its Race to the Top grant program and other education policies.

The review, announced in January, was triggered by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a replacement of President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2015. The South Dakota board says it intends to review the state's curriculum standards to ensure compliance with federal mandates, as ESSA standards differ from NCLB standards in some ways.

Mary Scheel-Buysse, co-founder of South Dakotans Against Common Core, says the timing of the curriculum reevaluation is suspect.

"The timing of the announcement—four days before the legislative session—to move up the review of the math standards ... is curious," Scheel-Buysse said. "I have to wonder if this announcement was timed to head off another Common Core battle in the legislature."

### **A Lost Generation**

Scheel-Buysse says repealing Common Core, rather than revising it, would be an essential step toward improving education outcomes in South Dakota government schools.

“Our children can never get back the learning years that have been lost, while the state has played games to cause Common Core to become embedded in our schools,” Scheel-Buysse said. “Our children and grandchildren are the guinea pigs in this experiment. That is why parents do not like Common Core and the transformation of public education in South Dakota from academics to workforce development, beginning in kindergarten. They see the side effects and harm being done to their children every evening at the supper table.”

### **Calls for ‘Serious Evaluation’**

Neal McCluskey, a research fellow at the Cato Institute, says it’s important South Dakota lawmakers really evaluate the effectiveness of the Common Core standards instead of merely pretending to do so.

“If they give it a serious evaluation, not just a public display that is really intended to give cover for keeping Common Core, then it should satisfy a lot of people with concerns about Common Core,” McCluskey said. “It is not yet clear, however, how they plan to reexamine their standards.”

### **Calls for More Choices**

McCluskey says one problem with the curriculum standards is they disenfranchise parents, who are central stakeholders in their children’s education.

“Everyone would be better off if they could choose schools best suited for their unique children and [if] schools could use all sorts of different things, including curricula, to tailor their services to different subsets of children,” McCluskey said. “The way Common Core got into schools—federal coercion through Race to the Top funding competition and waivers for the No Child Left Behind Act—almost totally cuts parents out of the picture.”