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House Education Committee

Testimony on HB 2289

Presented by:

Becky Greer, Curriculum Director, Shawnee Heights USD 450

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Madam Chair and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

My name is Becky Greer. I am the Curriculum Director for Shawnee Heights USD 450 and am testifying in opposition to House Bill 2289. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My opposition stems from our current investment in, and our commitment to the Common Core Standards.

- Over the last three years, Shawnee Heights has had over 100 individuals review the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Math. This count includes teachers, parents and Board of Education members. It is our position the standards are good for student learning. We have two years of fully implementing the Math Common Core and believe those standards were the impetus for improvement already made by our students.
- Think about obtaining a driver's license. It is very clear what one must do in order to obtain the actual license. One must read, study, practice, take a written test and ultimately must demonstrate the ability to drive successfully or a license will not be issued. Like obtaining a driver's license, the Common Core Standards are very clear on what one must be able to do in the end.
- As a result of extended committee work, teachers in USD 450 (many of whom have children who attend in the district) have examined and determined that the Common Core Standards help us focus on what students will need to be able to do once they leave school.
- These standards have allowed us to engage in conversations about good instructional practice and what student learning should look like. Our teachers are vested in these standards and need the latitude to continue implementing them.
- The process of changing an institution as established as education is never easy and always involves resistance and discomfort. Change typically occurs one conversation at a time. Managing the type of shift in teaching required to teach to the common core has been at times confusing, anxiety ridden, frustrating, and difficult. However, the ultimate result is the change in the vision we have for our students. We would find it difficult to return to standards less rigorous.
- Last year, Cassandra, a Shawnee Heights Middle School Student, addressed our Board of Education and explained as a result of the change in math standards, she for the first time in her life, understood Math as more than computing formulas correctly. It was no longer acceptable to pick the correct multiple-choice, she had to demonstrate she understood and could apply the

correct mathematical concepts to appropriate situations. She loved it. For her the instruction and what she was being asked to do matched, much like obtaining a driver's license.

- Our teachers own the work they did in Shawnee Heights. We changed how we taught math and it would not serve our student to go back to practices. While our data is limited, our test data shows improvement and our 9th grade math teachers are further along in the math curriculum than ever before.
- The conversations regarding the Common Core have driven a change in instruction and our students are learning and retaining more than ever before. The standards are good and at the local level, we chose how to implement. The cost of implementation is no different than our cycle of adopting new materials every seven years. We bought resources in our normal curriculum cycle to support these standards as we went through our normal transparent curriculum review process. We are currently in our scheduled English Language Arts review and while we have not yet bought resources, we have determined that the Common Core will serve our students better than our current standards.
- Do not take away our local control to determine what resources we use to teach. We have determined that the Common Core serves our district well and will serve all Kansas students well. We wish to continue to be able to select the resources locally that match our needs. No matter how well intentioned, House Bill 2289 will undermine the last three years of our work in Shawnee Heights USD 450 and the futures of our students.