

Testimony of Margaret Bideau  
House Education Committee  
March 21, 2013  
House Bill 2289 - Common Core Standards

I am Margaret Bideau from Chanute, Kansas, and I have been an elementary school teacher for 29 years. I currently teach 4th grade at Chanute Elementary School. My husband is Ed Bideau, who is the State Representative for the 9th District.

I am strongly in favor of retaining the Common Core Standards. While the Kansas state standards we had were good, these are better. The Common Core Standards are more rigorous, and foster higher level thinking skills in the learning process. To prepare kids for today's world, educators need to go beyond teaching kids to just memorize and retain facts. While that is certainly still important, and there is a place for that, we are now also focusing on what could be called "deeper thinking skills". Under Common Core Standards, we are asking our students to not only remember and understand facts and concepts, but to analyze, evaluate and apply that knowledge as well.

One of the fundamental reasons we need Common Core Standards in the first place, is to address the fact that we live in a very mobile society. We now have a high population of families that regularly move in and out of communities, and between states. As teachers, we have to find out where the kids are at academically, and fill in the gaps for them. In the past, kids that have moved in from different states have had educational backgrounds that varied greatly. By the same token, our Kansas kids moving to other states are put in the same situation. We need consistency across the board, no matter where a child lives, or where his family might move to. Another critical issue involves what curriculum we use to prepare students for college. We have thousands of kids coming to Kansas from other states to attend our colleges, and thousands of Kansas kids leave to attend out of state universities each year. Every college freshman needs to be well prepared, and there should be strong and consistent standards to ensure that they are. We all need to be on the same page!

There is a lot of misunderstanding and wrong perceptions about what the Common Core Standards are, and how they came about. Many people mistakenly believe that they are somehow being forced upon us in Kansas. As you know, after the very lengthy and thorough process where teachers and education leaders worked together to craft these standards, there was a period of public input where any Kansas citizen could preview the standards and make comments or suggestions for change . Kansas then freely CHOSE to adopt the standards in October of 2010, and now 46 states in all have adopted these same standards.

Another misconception I have been hearing is that Kansas teachers are somehow "tied down" or "locked into" certain teaching practices through these standards. This is simply not true. Common Core Standards and instructional practices are NOT the same thing. While the standards are the same across the state, the instruction and implementation of those standards is not going to be the same in every classroom. I still have the freedom to develop lesson plans to meet the needs of MY individual students. I have been on the committee to adapt the Common Core Standards to our own school district in Chanute. We have worked hard over the past year to "fine-tune" these standards to fit the needs of OUR students in OUR district.

All of these concerns and arguments aside, it is a fact that if Kansas rejects these standards, our state will have a huge financial burden to write new standards and assessments. This will also take a great amount of time and resources. Why would we want to do this when we already CHOSE to adopt an excellent set of standards for our state, well over two years ago and have worked hard to tailor them for Kansas?

I ask you to please consider only the facts, and not some of the unfounded fears and accusations of people that are often misinformed. We have a great set of standards in place, and they are working well for teachers and kids in Kansas. Thank you very much for your consideration of my views on this important issue.

Margaret Bideau  
Chanute, Kansas