

House Education Committee

Thursday, March 21, 2013

Dr. Deborah J. Hamm, Superintendent of Newton USD 373

HB 2289

Dear Representatives,

On behalf of the students, teachers, parents, and Newton Board of Education members, I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to provide this testimony on their behalf regarding HB 2289. I wish I could be with you today to speak personally in opposition to this bill.

I am writing to the entire House Education Committee even though I know that some of you support the implementation of Kansas College and Career Ready Standards that have been adopted by the State Board of Education. For those of you that support these rigorous and relevant standards, thank you. And, I encourage you to stand firm in your support. These standards are good for Kansas students!

For the last decade, educators have been limited in their ability to promote higher-level thinking, creativity, and innovation by previous standards that focused on rote memorization and lower-level standards. These new standards encourage teachers and administrators to embrace standards that expect more - not less - from students.

The new standards (KCCRS) provide districts with a framework to build curriculum around skills that students need to be successful in this century. I applaud the work of Governors and State School Officers that had the foresight to understand the mobility of our country's citizens and the importance of high standards for all of its children. And yet, the work they accomplished still provides the flexibility and local control for districts to develop curriculum that addresses specific needs.

As a child my father served in the U.S. Navy and we moved about every two years. This created large gaps in my education. The gaps happened not because I missed school and just missed part of the curriculum but because individual states had different expectations for students at different grades. If these standards had been developed then, I would have had a different experience as a child and not been behind or ahead of my peers every time I moved.

In Newton, our teachers and administrators have been immersed in the standards for the last year. We have worked to engage English Language Arts teachers from Pre-K to senior English in dialogue and discussion about what the standards mean and what instructional practices need to be in place to successfully engage students in their learning. Our teachers are mostly excited about the standards and the rigor that is apparent in the requirements. We are anxious to move forward.

HB 2289 is not in the best interest of Kansas students or Kansas educators. It stops a process that will have a positive impact on the educational experiences of students. Please do not support this bill.

Thank you for your service to Kansas.