

Written Testimony re: HB 2835

In Oregon and across the nation there is widespread disagreement as to the virtues of the Common Core Standards. Many educators believe the pedagogy intrinsic to the Common Core is largely untried and unworkable. Many informed people have shown that the standards for Common Core are not, in fact, higher than long established standards. It may at times be difficult to compare the Common Core standards with traditional standards because the Common Core standards are often vague using phrases like “grade appropriate” but, on the whole, they do not seem to be higher standards – particularly in mathematics.

The critics of Common Core cross party lines and they include both traditional district teachers like Kathleen Jeskey of Opt Out Oregon and advocates of more public school choice. Your own education committee chair, Margaret Dougherty, is co-sponsoring a bill that would preclude the use of these tests to evaluate teachers and schools. If the tests are a flawed way of assessing teachers, how can they be a good way of assessing students?

There is something wrong with a system if so many respected authorities in the field find it wanting – or, at the very least, untested and unproven.

Nevertheless, as the law now stands each Oregon school district will be forced to expend a great deal of increasingly scarce resources to train and convert students and teachers to Common Core. At a school district meeting in Rainier, educators claimed that the retraining of the teachers themselves would mean that Wednesday morning classes would need to be cancelled for *three years*.

In Oregon, centralized top down control of the school system hasn't worked well. It has increased funds to administrators at every level, but decreased funds to teachers in the classroom. The results of CIM CAM, and OAKS have not been good. Our students are not improving. In fact, they are falling farther and farther behind the national average. In areas like New York City and Louisiana, where individual school autonomy is being actively encouraged, student achievement has been greatly improved. These more autonomous schools are making remarkable progress educating minority students. They are shrinking the education gap.

More autonomy is good because it is more successful -- particularly in educating the financially disadvantaged.

In the interest of all Oregonians, it is wise and prudent to allow those school districts that embrace the Common Core and the Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA) to lead the way. If they are successful, other school districts will “buy into” Common Core and follow their lead. In the meanwhile, districts should be allowed to opt out of the Common Core conversion if the principals, parents and teachers wish to. They should not be coerced into Common Core. As per HB2835, if a district chooses not to implement Common Core, they will lose the Common Core

funding. That funding should go back into the general education fund and benefit students across the state.

HB 2835 is fiscally responsible, and it will increase local control, parental involvement in schools, and individual freedom.

I strongly support HB 2835.

Chana B. Cox
Senior Lecturer in the Humanities, Emerita
Lewis and Clark College

Address:
Chana B. Cox
23545 NW Skyline
North Plains, Oregon, 97133
503-621-3380