Growing Rejection of Common Core

Release: June 10, 2014

by Phyllis Schlafly

The most controversial current issue in education today is clearly Common Core. It's being more hotly debated than bullying, zero tolerance, sex ed, abortion, or even school lunches.

Common Core is the title of a new set of standards that the Obama Administration has been trying to force the states to use. Even before the standards were written, 45 states and the District of Columbia signed on, encouraged by inducements of federal funds. The principal outliers are Texas, Alaska, Nebraska, and Virginia.

Now that parents and teachers are finding out what is commanded by Common Core standards and what is being taught by "Common Core-aligned" materials, moms and teachers are raising a ruckus to try to get their states to repeal their state's involvement. Many are demanding that their state withdraw altogether from Common Core, principally because they believe it is a takeover by the Obama Administration of all that kids are taught and not taught.

The backlash against Common Core has developed into a potent political force. About 100 bills have been introduced into various state legislatures to cancel, stop or slow down Common Core requirements.

Indiana broke the ice on March 23, becoming the first state to pass an anti-Common Core law. It strikes out references to Common Core in the law and requires the state board of education to maintain Indiana's sovereignty while complying with federal standards.

When Indiana Governor Mike Pence signed this legislation that opted his state out of Common Core standards, he said, "I believe our students are best served when decisions about education are made at the state and local level."

The Indiana bill was introduced as a straight repeal of Common Core, but it ended up keeping so many Common Core requirements that the original sponsor of the bill, Senator Scott Schneider, pulled his name off the bill.

The game of some people, obviously, is to pass standards that are nearly identical to Common Core but under a different name, because the name itself has become

toxic. And states are always solicitous to maintain their flow of federal funds, which the Obama Administration uses as bribes or threats.

The second state that went public against Common Core was South Carolina. On May 30, Governor Nikki Haley signed a bill abolishing Common Core standards in that state beginning in 2015.

Legislators were responding to constituent complaints that Common Core introduces frivolous and illogical teaching techniques to no apparent purpose, while imposing new standards that are not meaningful improvements, and ends up being a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach.

Parents won a remarkable victory when the Oklahoma Legislature repealed use of Common Core by the overwhelming bipartisan vote of 71 to 18 in the House and 31 to 10 in the Senate, and replaced it with academic standards written by Oklahoma. After receiving an estimated 20,000 phone calls in support of the repeal, Governor Mary Fallin signed the repeal into law on June 5.

This law directs the State Board of Education to create new more rigorous standards by August of next year. The State Regents for Higher Education, the State Board of Career and Technology Education, and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce will evaluate the newly written standards to make sure they truly make students "college and career ready."

Governor Fallin's message in signing the repeal of Common Core was blunt in explaining what is wrong with Common Core. She wrote, "President Obama and Washington bureaucrats have usurped Common Core in an attempt to influence state education standards. Common Core is now widely regarded as the President's plan to establish federal control of curricula, testing and teaching strategies."

Governor Fallin's message reminded us that "Citizens, parents, educators and legislators ... have expressed fear that adopting Common Core gives up local control of Oklahoma's public schools." We congratulate Oklahoma's Governor for having the courage to stop the well-financed plan to railroad Oklahoma's public schools into kowtowing to federal control.

From the start, Common Core has been ballyhooed as a state-led (not federal) initiative that each state could choose to voluntarily adopt. But, as the Governor wrote,

"The words 'Common Core' in Oklahoma are now so divisive that they have become a distraction that interferes with our mission of providing the best education possible for our children."

Like most leftwingers, when Education Secretary Arne Duncan was besieged on all sides by Common Core critics, he played the race card, for which he later had to apologize. He accused opponents of Common Core of just being "white suburban moms."

Duncan should have read the New York Times, which published a picture of both white and African-American moms protesting Common Core, wearing signs that said "My child is not common." Parents nationwide are saying No to Common Core.

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