

Necessary accountability

BY PHIL KIRK

The political debate over the Common Core State Standards is more riddled with ironies and myths than any issue I have been involved with in 50 years.

These standards are a set of clear, consistent goals and expectations that describe what students should know in math and English, no matter where they may live in the United States. That is critical for many reasons but especially because of the mobility of families, including the military.

Point of view

Why should a student in Colorado need to know more or less than one in North Carolina?

North Carolina has had statewide standards called the N.C. Standard Course of Study for more than 50 years. However, sad to say, objective reviews found that our standards were not nearly high enough to prepare our students to be successful, not only in the United States but anywhere in the world.

For years many public education critics have complained that our tests were “too easy.” Because each state had its own standards, we had no way to compare our students with those in other states or throughout the world. Now we are hearing from those who would reject this improved accountability.

Yes, the standards are higher, and that has brought opposition from those who may not want to admit that we are short-changing our students.

Frankly, some educators and parents oppose common core because of its rigor and the fact that some of our schools aren't as good as we might have thought. The standards are certainly free from any political or philo-



sophical point of view. Feel free to visit cor-standards.org and read for yourself.

Others claim this is a takeover of our schools by the federal government. If that were so, I would be leading the fight against common core! The standards were developed at the state level by governors, chief state school officers and their state-based staffs. In North Carolina, the business community actively participated through the North Carolina Business Committee for Education and other advisory groups to the State Board of Education and State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Many critics are also conservative when it comes to spending tax money, as I am. Tens of millions of tax dollars have been spent over the past several years in the training of teachers in Common Core in North Carolina. To scrap that work and precious time spent by classroom teachers and to waste more time and tax money in developing new standards would be mind-boggling.

While compensation for educators is embarrassingly low and unacceptable, over the years I have heard nearly as many complaints about the “flavor of the month” education fads and the failure of politicians to allow necessary time to see if needed reforms were working. What better example is there than what some are trying to do to Common Core State Standards?

Frankly, much of the opposition comes from those who are opposed to President Obama and tying him to common core in order to gain support for its elimination. They have not been able to defeat Obamacare, which I also oppose, so they are taking on common core instead. While the president is an easy target, he is not responsible for common core.

Kudos to Gov. Pat McCrory and to Democrats and Republicans in the legislature who recognize that the abolition of common core would lower standards and expectations for all students and leave our students at a great disadvantage.

Eliminating common core for some unknown standards, which would take years to formulate and implement due to their complexity and the massive and costly teacher staff development, would be a

huge step backward for a state that once led the nation in improvement in public education due to the leadership of such governors as Democrat Jim Hunt and Republican Jim Martin and to the bipartisan leadership in the General Assembly.

Let's stick to the facts rather than the rhetoric, which has been very misleading.

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