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News Release

State Board of Education Approves Common Core Standards

The Colorado State Board of Education today voted 4-3 to fully adopt the Common Core standards in mathematics and English language arts."

The vote followed more than an hour of comments from individual board members and a recommendation from Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones, who supported adoption of the Common Core.

The four board members supporting the adoption were Elaine Gantz Berman, Vice Chairman Randy DeHoff, Jane Goff and Angelika Schroeder. Opposed were Peggy Littleton, Marcia Neal and Board Chairman Bob Schaffer.

Commissioner Jones urged approval on the basis that the Common Core standards "tightly align" with Colorado Academic Standards approved by the state board in December 2009. The Common Core standards present a "robust foundation on which local educators can base their work," he said. "They set a common destination for teachers to push their students toward, but the path to that destination remains in the hands of local teachers and local schools."

The motion to adopt the Common Core includes the provision that these standards will be augmented with Colorado Academic Standards and that the changes will not equate to more than 15 percent of the total content standards in each subject.

Board Vice Chair Randy DeHoff, who submitted the motion to adopt, said the decision was one of the most difficult decisions during his 12 years of board service.

DeHoff said he had weighed the concern about national “takeover” of education but said the more important issue is that the world has changed and Colorado students need every chance to keep up with international expectations for learning.

Prior to the vote, the board heard from 34 individual speakers including teachers, parents, elected officials and representatives of business and advocacy groups. Thirty of the speakers opposed adoption.

Listening to the public comments, DeHoff noted that “not one critic has said anything directly critical of the common core.” DeHoff said he had read the standards and found nothing objectionable. “If anything,” he added, they “strengthen our standards.”

Board member Peggy Littleton said the board office and individual board members had received numerous e-mails and letters with the majority urging that the Common Core standards be rejected.

Board members opposed to the Common Core articulated concerns about the federal government’s intrusion into Colorado classrooms and argued that the benefits available in the form of federal grant dollars weren’t worth the price of partnership. Many suggested that the Colorado’s governmental sovereignty is at risk.

Calling for more-ambitious, more-diverse and multiple approaches to setting even higher standards than those represented by the Common Core, Schaffer urged the state to seek an unconstrained path toward innovation.

“Our students deserve to compete well and succeed in a global economy,” Schaffer said. “This will be much better accomplished by an approach advancing legitimate academic freedom and local innovation than by conforming to a constrained set of nationalized central plans.”

Board Member Elaine Gantz Berman emphasized the idea for Common Core standards grew out of an effort by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. “They were developed by states, by us,” she said. “I don’t see federal government

intrusion...I believe there should be similarity and comparability across states."

Board Member Peggy Littleton spoke strongly against the adoption, likening the move to taking out a mortgage loan without knowing the terms because no rules for implementation are currently in place. Board member Marcia Neal compared adoption to "putting your feet on a very slippery slope."

Urging support, Board Member Jane Goff said she was convinced that the Common Core and Colorado standards were a close match. "We are not going to lose the essence, the heart of our state standards," she said.

Board Member Angelika Schroeder said the decision amounted to one basic need: "Our kids have got to be prepared for the big world," she said.

More Information

An independent, third-party study comparing the national common core and the Colorado academic standards, conducted by WestEd, an educational research, development and service organization, is posted online:

www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/UAS/CAS_CCSSI_Gap_Analysis.html.

For more information, contact Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, or Megan McDermott, 303-866-2334, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the CDE e-mail news service, please visit

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