

Common Core Standards

I'll try and make this short which won't be easy.

On August 2, the State Board of Education will vote on which to adopt: The Colorado Model Content Standards or The National Common Core Standards. And while the decision may not seem to be monumental, it really is. Because what is at the center of this discussion is whether or not the residents of Colorado want to maintain control of their schools or instead turn that control over to the federal government. Oh it won't happen all at once- and that's why this doesn't necessarily jump out as a big deal. But as is the case with a lot of things, it's an insidious and slow moving process that starts with just one foot in the door. And make no mistake, the National Common Core Standards is a foot- and a big one.

So why is this question even on the table? Well, it's a step in the "Race to the Top" which is a cleverly designed program put forth by Pres. Obama. It's a program that has the theoretical goal of improving the quality of education across the nation but which seems to be driven by the control goal- control by the federal government of yet another facet of our lives.

And why would we even consider it? The carrot. Yep- the carrot, aka federal dollars. Because what is being offered is the possibility of some federal dollars. Notice I have used the word possibility because this does not guarantee dollars; it just puts Colorado in the mix with other states that have decided to play nice with the feds.

You might wonder at this point what dollars are in question. Is it a huge number? Is it money that we can't live without? And will the adoption of these standards actually have a pivotal positive effect on the Colorado school system?

The answer to all three of these questions is a resounding NO! But let's take them one by one. If Colorado were to win this phase of "The Race", its share would be \$50 per student for 4 years. But that's by today's accounting- who knows what those numbers will be tomorrow. Because congress has already reduced the total amount once with no guarantee that they won't do it again. So will the final number be \$35 per student? \$22? \$7.50? It's anybody's guess.

Can we live without it? You bet. Because the problem with our education system has little if anything to do with the dollars we throw at it. Money is not the problem nor is it the solution. But that's a topic for another day.

So finally, will the adoption of these standards have a huge and positive effect? Last week the Board of Ed heard the report of an independent consultant who did a side-by-side comparison of the Colorado Model and the National Standards and it was a wash on the standards that have been defined, namely math and English. Because what I forgot to mention is that math and English are the only two standards that will have been defined by August 2- aka D day- and we're being asked to trust them-

take it on faith that once they get around to science and history et al, we'll agree with those too even though we'll see them after the fact. And if somebody out there wants to buy a bridge in Brooklyn, tell them to call me- I must have it round here some place.

So that's it in a nutshell. Maybe more than you wanted to know but probably enough for you to get the picture. And ultimately it all boils down to a few questions. Are you ready to trade the future of Colorado schools for a few dollars? Are Colorado kids on the auction block at \$50 a head? Do you want the federal government involved in yet another facet of your life?

If the answer to these questions is NO, then quickly send an email to the State Board of Education before August 2 at 9:30 am when they will be voting on this very important issue.

nevansm@cde.state.co.us and CC: peggycostateboe@msn.com

As an alternative you can also attend the public hearing on August 2 at 7:30 am.
State Board of Education
201 E Colfax, room 507
Denver, CO 80203