

4 March 2014

DRAFT

State Representative Bryan Nelson
Capitol Office 303 House Office Building
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Dear Representative Nelson:

Hello. This is the first time I have contacted you! By way of brief introduction I am an 8-year Eustis resident; a retired Aerospace engineer with 33 years experience and a Doctorate in Optical Sciences; and my wife and I have four grown children.

I would like to address the issue of Common Core in Florida. I will first present a summary of my experiences at the recent State School Board Meeting in Orlando on February 18th which I attended, and then move on to some of my personal concerns based on my studies and impressions from attendance at other meetings (pro and con) over the past couple years. I am particularly perplexed and concerned about the continuing divide between Floridians over this important issue and what might be done to help us reach more unity.

The School Board meeting started about 8:30am following about an hour of peaceful protesting outside. After months of public input from meetings and internet comments on Common Core, the Florida School Board had gathered to (among other agenda items) hear final public commentary and vote on a very small package of proposed changes to Florida's version, including the addition of Cursive Writing and Calculus. Commissioner Stewart briefly specifically acknowledged public concerns with "Federal Overreach", "Data Mining" and "Instructional Materials content", as well as the Board's concerns over Transition Period Assessments, but neglected mentioning Special Education Shortcomings, Suppression of Parent Involvement, Virtual Textbook Pitfalls (including sexual advertising), Textbook Vetting Deficiencies, and Total Taxpayer Cost estimates-topics all subsequently addressed by the public.



Commissioner Stewart speaking at Meeting

She went on to promote the label “Florida Education Standards” to replace the now unpopular term “Common Core,” although she surprisingly still retained its indefensible, inaccurate and recently jettisoned term “Internationally Benchmarked” (see www.stopcommoncore.com/myths-versus-facts/). Chairman Chartrand later in the meeting claimed remarkably that these standards were actually developed by Floridians! Thus there appeared to be an initiative to disassociate the Florida Standards from the now unpopular descriptor “Common Core,” and possibly mislead the public into thinking that the Florida standards are not Common Core based in an effort to win more support. I was particularly disturbed by these apparently political actions from what should be a non-political body. If true this would be an unacceptable violation of transparency, especially given the serious consequences of making a mistake in choosing whether to continue with this initiative or not. Ironically, while some Board members had lauded the large turnout as a demonstration of democracy in action, it seems others were possibly on a mission to obfuscate the truth which democracy depends on to survive!

Following the Board’s opening remarks I was witness to hours of intense public commentary weighted 49-3 against Common Core (of the three supporters two were from the same organization and the third was an admitted community organizer). The emotional bleeding and pleading of Florida’s citizenry was from a wide variety of parents, educators and leaders (including PTA chairman Eileen Segal) and sometimes brought tears to my eyes. This was in stark contrast with the Chairman’s surprisingly rude disrespectful attitude as he attempted to silence small displays of banned clapping, going so far as to spar with one commentator and threaten to cancel even the mere two minutes of commentary budget he had imposed on each speaker, some of whom had travelled many hours (and all at their own expense and sacrifice) to be heard. It was symbolically reminiscent of Russia’s “Bloody Sunday” in January of 1905 when the peasants had humbly gathered near the Winter Palace to petition the Czar with their grievances, only to be fired upon by the Imperial Guard. Wikipedia had this to say about that event: “Bloody Sunday was an event with grave consequences for the Tsarist regime, as the disregard for ordinary people shown by the reaction of the authorities undermined support for the state.”



Audience at Board Meeting

The Boards' relatively quick 5-0 vote in favor of proposed changes at the end of the public input (and their hasty exit to lunch) was in stark contrast with the lengthy 49-3 commentary against Common Core as a whole, and seemed to provide visual display of the extreme divide of administrators & politicians vs parents & front-line educators.

Based on experiences from this meeting and my previous research, I now suspect that on the one side some education administrators and politicians view this standardization program as a convenient pre-packaged panacea: a strategic MEANS to the END product of allegedly delivering a better education with higher reported assessment scores (especially with an assessment recalibration opportunity!) and better management control (but with of course undisclosed cost estimates). On the other hand many citizens sense abuse through exploitation of, experimentation with, and control of their child's education as a tactical MEANS to the END of Federally imposed social and political change while simultaneously endangering their children's future happiness and opportunities for success through substandard preparation. **Thus one reason for the divide between Floridians on Common Core can be explained based on their perceptions of a Trojan Horse paradigm: The gift of innocent-looking Standards promises masquerading merely as a product tool, but already functioning as a socialist propaganda injection process.**

Emerging examples of subtle one-sided brainwashing in English and math have already surfaced; only a few are shared for illustration.

1. Perry Chiaramonte of Fox News (11/6/2013 "Common Core lessons blasted for sneaking politics into elementary classrooms") presented one example of apparently innocent English lessons on brevity that had students rewrite a sentence indicating that the President's job is to make sure the nation's laws are fair. But since that job really belongs to the judicial branch, and not the executive, this English lesson subliminally supports more dictatorship.
2. FoxNews.com (2/4/2014) also reported that the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' illuminations website (promoted as offering "resources for teaching math.") has "math lesson plans peppered throughout the NCTM's website [that] seem to seem to have an emphasis on 'social justice,' a phrase mentioned 130 times on the site, according to EAGnews.org." One NCTM statement reportedly said "Educators increasingly recognize the important role that mathematics teaching plays in helping students to understand and overcome social injustice and inequality."
3. A review of Tennessee textbooks by a group of "responsible, well-educated and qualified parents) discovered social, political and religious biases, including a comment about the latter involving Islamic half-truths that states (The Textbook Tattler, textbooksadvocates@gmail.com), "These textbooks are not about understanding Islam in the world today and in history. They are about public relations and proselytizing."

During a 5 minute break in the School Board meeting I had an interesting conversation with a woman named Pat sitting behind me. She seemed to suddenly stumble upon enlightenment that I quickly named the "Social Justice Excellence Paradox". She asked rhetorically: How can one expect an atmosphere and realization of high achievement in a Progressive-promoted culture of Social Justice where by definition everyone must be equal? I realized that due to the liberal philosophies of Common Core's founders, any answer will be incompatible with Florida's current

educational prosperity momentum, ironically manifested at the beginning of that day's Board meeting with the awards recognitions.

The model 2010 Common Core vehicle may need more of an overhaul or replacement than a mere tune up. State Legislator mechanics and the Governor must travel at a safer speed on the road to unity, **pausing if necessary to be more responsive to Floridians' concerns**, and not just pretend to solve the problems with a name change and a few token alterations to alien-derived, Federally-bribed standards as they drive on past desperate sign-carrying parents and frustrated front-line educators on their way to the November elections. Accountable elected officials might have the power to control choices, but not their consequences at the ballot box.

I will conclude by saying that we have many hard working and dedicated servants in Florida's education industry and I salute their commitments. At the same time I have concerns with the political agendas by some in our state and nation which represent potential threats to our society and democratic republic through brainwashing of our children.

By way of summary I submit the following requests:

1. Feedback to me about the motivations of Commissioner Pam Stewart regarding her attempts to apparently suppress connection with Common Core.
2. Review of Chairman Chartrand's tone and behavior to some members of the audience of the February 18th School Board meeting, and counseling to him if deemed appropriate, with a report back to me.
3. Investigation by the Legislature to resolve the Trojan Horse issue, specifically to compile and investigate all instances of alleged political, social or religious propaganda existing in Florida textbooks and institute a process for corrective action when discovered in the future, up to and including insertion of errata disclosure statements into each and every textbook found tainted.
4. Slow the momentum of Common Core processes, stopping if necessary, until the Legislature has investigated, itemized and officially responded to all concerns (including but not limited to Federal Overreach, Data Mining, Instructional Materials content, Transition Period Assessments, Special Education Shortcomings, Suppression of Parent Involvement, Virtual Textbook Pitfalls (including sexual advertising), Textbook Vetting Deficiencies, and Total Taxpayer Cost before continuing with Florida implementation.
5. I also recommend that any Legislator voting on Common Core related issues should watch hours 2 and 3 of the February 18th School Board meeting, found at <http://thefloridachannel.org/videos/21814-state-board-education-meeting/>.

Thank you, Representative Nelson, for hearing my impressions and concerns. I would welcome any reply or dialog on this important issue, and wish you and your associates well during the current Legislative session.

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