



To: Members of the Senate Education Committee
Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee: K12, School Aid

From: Troy VanderLaan, Kentwood Public Schools

Subject: Support of Common Core Standards

Date: October 2, 2013

My name is Troy VanderLaan, and I have been teaching US History, Economics, and Civics at the secondary level for the Kentwood Public School District since 2006. My testimony today will focus on how the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) prepares my students for today's global marketplace, and why we need to provide support for the continued implementation of the CCSS throughout our state's schools.

Our nation, and, more importantly, our great state of Michigan is in a challenging transition of providing our population with the skill sets needed to be competent citizens that can compete in the current state, national, and global marketplaces; furthermore, I believe that one of my main purposes as a public school teacher is to provide an education for my students that will prepare them to be able to use relevant applications of the skills needed to compete in these marketplaces. Whether my students decide to start a career in the trades and service sectors, or enroll in a university, they must have a firm foundation in a specific set of skills. These skill sets include being able to think critically and use reason abstractly and quantitatively. These skills also include the ability to communicate verbally and in written form, develop and apply new skills, and construct viable arguments to critique the reasoning of others. My students also need to be able to incorporate the use of technology into completing an objective, construct models with mathematics, and look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning. My students must also learn how to engage in discussions as well as be able to self-evaluate their performance throughout any given task. All of the skills I listed above form the foundation of the CCSS.

The Kentwood Public School district enrolls over 8,700 students. The district proudly represents over 60 different nations with over 50 different spoken languages and dialects. Kentwood is an ethnically, religiously, and socio-economically diverse district with roughly 60% of our students eligible for the free-and-reduced lunch program. The district continually adapts to provide its students with the best possible education, and by incorporating the CCSS at all grade levels, we are enhancing the teaching of the state's current grade level content expectations (GLCE) as well as providing our students with the skill sets needed to succeed in today's marketplaces.

I urge our lawmakers to support the funding for the CCSS in our schools. The CCSS are more rigorous than the GLCE; therefore, teaching the rigor and relevance found in the CCSS brings many challenges to districts like Kentwood, and without appropriate support and funding to implement the CCSS, we will be leaving our students without the necessary skills needed to maintain our great state and our great nation within today's global marketplace. Thank you for your time and service to our state.

Sincerely,

Troy VanderLaan
Social Studies Teacher; Kentwood Public Schools

