

August 2, 2010

OPEN LETTER TO THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the board,

I am a candidate for the State Board of Education from the 5th district. I am writing to state my concerns about the board adopting the federal government's national common core standards.

Individualism and innovation are among the fundamental principles, which have made this nation great. This is true about education as well. The decisions and ideas that have moved education forward have come from individuals free to innovate, free from nationalized or other overbearing top-down constraints.

The federal funding which the acceptance of this national standard is designed to capture may very well be less than it appears—and slippery to hang onto.

Consider this: The \$175 million federal grant being pursued with this effort in the second round of Race to the Top competition is coming from a one-time appropriation within the "Stimulus plan" adopted by congress as part of an economic recovery effort.

Almost half of the funding is slated for administrative overhead and projects that will leave only 90 million dollars for the school districts. That money will be divided over four years. When you divide that money among the almost 800,000 students of our state, you end up with just more than \$28 per student, for four years.

Let me ask a question, which I believe to be the crux of this discussion. Is it worth \$28.00 a student, which will likely evaporate after four years, to give up our effort to lead education in this country, and instead fall in line to a national common denominator, which likely will become a lower common denominator?

The idea of competition as expressed in The Race to the Top effort makes sense. We should compete to make education better. But we should compete every day, in every way, at every level. This competition appears to be a competition to end all competitions. That in the end will be bad for education. Let's instead support a local standard that exceeds a national standard and seek to become a stronger leading force in education--not a follower.

Sincerely,

