

TESTIMONY
H.B. 5078 AN ACT IMPOSING A MORATORIUM ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS
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As a representative of Norwich Public schools, I offer the following testimony in strong opposition to the enactment of H.B. 5078 AN ACT IMPOSING A MORATORIUM ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON CORE OF STATE STANDARDS for the following reasons.

- Although developed with the nation in mind, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) provide the State of Connecticut a meaningful response to a specific crisis affecting Connecticut students, commonly referred to as the achievement gap. The achievement gap notes the academic difference between students in our wealthiest and poorest districts. The CCSS have afforded our district the opportunity to set consistently high expectations for academic achievement, ensure educational expectations that are equitable, and measure our students' performance with students across communities within our state and across the nation.
- The CCSS provides a framework with consistent standards across a learning progression allowing our district an avenue to implement meaningful and long lasting changes in the way we educate the students of Norwich.
- Norwich Public Schools started our work with the CCSS during the 2010-2011 school year, with members of the Norwich Public School team on the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Rigorous Curriculum Design Team. As of this date, our district has completely overhauled all English Language Arts and Math Curricula across grades K - 8 in an effort to comply with the 2014-2015 full implementation target date set by the CSDE.

Much of the recent media attention and published literature in CT is focused on what our state and districts have not done to prepare for the CCSS. However, I would like to share what the CCSS has already provided for our district and our students.

- To prepare our teachers and students to build knowledge through content rich nonfiction, one hundred percent of the NPS English Language Arts curriculum units are grounded in the CCSS standards AND aligned with science and social studies content. NPS thoughtfully equipped every classroom with relevant, high interest content based texts that relate to the real world. These materials are specifically designed to meet the needs of students at various levels of reading and language proficiency and make the content accessible to ALL students. Staff developers have been in district providing teachers with embedded professional learning support.
- NPS judiciously used funds provided by the CSDE to purchase high quality literature that support our standards based instruction. In addition to classic literature, and with the support of an expert in culturally responsive pedagogy, we carefully selected additional texts that expose our students to different cultural lenses. We aim to increase our students' awareness of current and historical social issues that many of students can relate to today. For example, when learning about the Revolutionary War in their social studies classroom, students in eighth grade are analyzing plot and determining themes over the course of a text – while reading a historical fiction novel told through the eyes of the heroine, an adolescent female slave. We are teaching students to think about their thinking so they can access complex, exemplary texts that they may have not had the opportunity to read before the CCSS.
- As part of a three year implementation plan, NPS created long term partnerships with literacy experts from University of Connecticut and Teachers College, NYC to provide guidance and embedded professional development to improve our teachers ability to implement curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- NPS is monitoring student progress in new ways. As a district, we are using results from the NWEA MAP assessment to assess student performance in reading and math. We have documented student growth between fall, winter and spring. We are using this data, at the individual student level, to adjust our instruction and set individual student goals.

Most importantly, we believe the CCSS have equalized the playing field for students across districts and set the stage for Connecticut to close the achievement gap in student learning. Norwich, like many Priority Districts, is under great pressure, difficult circumstances, and a lack of fiscal resources to

make the educational strides necessary to reduce the achievement gap and ultimately provide our students with a high quality education that enables them to compete with their peers in our neighboring districts.

For Norwich, the CCSS created an environment for change and provided the resources necessary to make that change a reality. I can say with confidence that to withdraw support at this stage of implementation would not provide any benefit or service to the immediate needs of our students and their families. In fact, a moratorium, in my opinion, would wreak havoc in our district and similar priority districts.

If the CCSS were the train, it is safe to say that the train has left the station and in Norwich, our students are on board. We acknowledge there is an enormous amount of work to do. But, I ask that you remember our students are at the heart of this conversation. The CCSS have been part of CT for years, and in a matter of months, students will move on to the next grade and leave our elementary schools and middle schools – a moratorium would not only derail the train, but also leave our students standing on the platform.