

Statement by Cynthia M. to Wyoming State Board of Education

Dear Members of the State Board of Education and Governor Mead,

My name is Cynthia M. For those of you whom I have not yet had the opportunity to meet, I live in Wyoming, where I am a general partner in a yearling cattle ranch operation with my husband, the mother of two school-aged children, a former public school teacher (still retain my Wyoming certification) and privileged to volunteer at my local school for three school years up until Spring 2013.

It has come to my attention that action may be taken to adopt the Next Generation Science Standards at the recently-announced State Board Meeting this week. I am writing to properly exercise my voice as a concerned citizen and urge you to vote "no" on adopting the NGSS for the review process.

I will do my best to briefly list my reasons for this request:

- 1. The Board's reputation for transparency and a process that responds to stakeholders is at risk.** Citizens in Wyoming are just now really learning about the CCSS, what they are and the ways they may impact local control. I was personally shocked and dismayed that I, a parent and teacher quite involved with my local school and certainly paying attention to messages from school and the activity of legislature, could possibly "miss" such a huge shift in education in our state. I heard the term "Common Core" tossed around, but only learned what it actually was (national standards that we no longer have any control over) long after "public comment" periods had passed. I missed it because about everyone missed it, except the politically connected and education personnel being "trained" very early on. **We have to ask why that is.** The fact that this week's meeting was originally scheduled as a retreat and only restructured and announced to the public days ago only feeds the perception that hearing from the public may *not be a priority for the Board at all, nor impact the process of adopting standards in any way.* Please take this opportunity to facilitate a fully transparent, highly publicized process that is responsive to the citizens AND the committees.
- 2. The assertion that teachers and school administrators are generally in favor of CCSS, and presumably, the NGSS, is misleading.** Remember, I am a teacher, too, and this one bothers me. As I don't have to fear for a job or work relationships souring, I am free to speak. It is far more accurate to say that teachers and administrators have been *professionally developed* into being in favor, and without everything being fully implemented, the jury is out. When it came to CCSS, they were presented with action-oriented training about the Standards and only potential (unproven, untested) outcomes. They naturally trusted that

there must be very good reasons for leadership moving in this direction, and that surely the “experts” developing these standards and tests could be relied upon. Once it became obvious that not only is Wyoming going down this path, but that teachers’ performance evaluations and assignments would be even more heavily linked to test outcomes, and given that teachers are generally compliant and servant-hearted, what else is there to do for a teacher employed by the state but go along? The truth is, many are becoming concerned, but you will not know how many, because they don’t speak out. The fact that only the NGSS are being considered for science standards adoption sends a clear message to teachers. My fear for them is by the time they finally begin to understand the *negative* aspects and trade-offs for what our state has done/will do by adopting standards we no longer have an effective voice in, we will be too far along in the process to extricate ourselves realistically.

3. **The NGSS indoctrinate children with assumed conclusions about politically charged issues.** No one argues the idea that under normal circumstances water boils at 212 degrees or that gravity exists. But there are numerous “issues” today that use scientific data in the interest of decision making, such as climate change, renewable energy, and the concept of “sustainability”. “Global warming” is only one example in the NGSS. Although there is prolific data to demonstrate otherwise, and scandals and controversy among scientists over this issue, the NGSS assume and teach that 1) temperatures are rising globally; and 2) human activities are the cause. **Teaching these assumptions as fact conditions students to willingly accept the inevitable “global agreements” and additional tax burdens to “solve” the perceived problem, whether these “remedies” are appropriate or not.** Rather than being introduced to these ideas as *possibilities* being examined, researched, and debated, and allowing students to look at evidence for both sides, they are taught this assumption as *fact*. This is a travesty. This kind of standard-setting teaches children not how to think, but what to think! Have we learned nothing from the dictatorships and other oppressive societies in history? Do we really want to deny students in Wyoming the opportunity to examine conflicting evidence for contested issues and learn to draw their own conclusions? Especially when such issues and proposed “solutions” would directly impact Wyoming’s economies?

4. **Wyoming State Statute prohibits the teaching of religion in our public schools.** This is determined to be the job of parent and family. The NGSS, which this Board is considering, consistently affirm an atheistic/materialistic/naturalistic worldview (atheism is a legally identified religion) throughout, by accepting no other explanation for phenomena addressed by science or for the ultimately religious questions that students are led to ask. Indeed, systematically and by assumption, the NGSS effectively suppress evidence that supports any other conclusion. This very serious

infringement has caused the state of Kansas' Board of Education to be served a lawsuit by Citizens for Objective Public Education (COPE). You can read the complaint here: <http://www.copeinc.org/docs/legal-complaint.pdf>. The group COPE's website, for further information, is <http://www.copeinc.org/about.html>. Wyoming will be at risk of instituting *unconstitutional standards* should it move ahead with adopting NGSS.

I urge you...please vote NO on adopting the NGSS for the review process. The public has not been adequately notified that this process may be beginning, and there are too many questions and conflicts with these standards to fast-forward into their adoption.

Thank you for hearing my concerns,
Cynthia M.
Wyoming