

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express my concerns to you.

I am the mother of a public elementary student. I had an excellent public education, and I value the same opportunity for all students.

The Wyoming Constitution states in Article 1, Section 1

“All power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their peace, safety and happiness; for the advancement of these ends they have at all times an inalienable and indefeasible right to alter, reform or abolish the government in such manner as they may think proper.”

It is my understanding that the people of Wyoming have the right to be a part of the decisions made in the education of our youth. However, intentionally or unintentionally, it seems as though the people no longer are included and retain this right. I am asking the Board today to realize that continuing the current process of standards adoption at this time would be to deny the rights of the people of Wyoming the power that is inherent to us. Let me further explain.

I understand that it is normal practice for this Board to review standards for Wyoming students according to W.S. 21-2-304 titled “Duties of the State Board of Education.”

W.S. 21-2-304(a) (iii) states “By rule and regulation **and in consultation and coordination with local school districts**, prescribe uniform student content and performance standards for the common core of knowledge and the common core of skills specified under W.S. 21-9-101(b)...” (emphasis added)

I am concerned about the actual “consultation and coordination with local school districts” because I have school board members from my local district saying that Wyoming is NOT going to look at the NEXT Generation Science Standards. And yet a member of the standards review committee (from another district than which I previously referred) recently reported they have been looking at the NEXT Generation Science Standards for over a year. My local school district has not been consulted or coordinated with as far as I am aware. I realize that they will have the chance to comment during the promulgation process, however, they would only be able to comment on the NEXT Generation Science Standards. It is obvious to me that local school districts were largely left out of the process leading to this point. Therefore, if you are going to vote today on whether or not to adopt these standards for the review process, I plead with you to vote NO and allow the consultation and coordination of the local school districts in a much more inclusive way in the process of deciding WHAT standards should make their way to this point in the process.

Chapter 6, Section 7 in the Rules and Regulations titled “Student Standards” states that “All public school students shall meet the student content and performance standards **at the level set by the school district aligned to state standards** for:

(a) Common Core of Knowledge, emphasizing reading, writing and mathematics in grades one (1) through eight (8): (W.S. 21-9-101(b)(i) and (ii)).

(b) Common Core of Skills. (W.S. 21-9-101(b)(iii)).

(c) The district shall involve parents, community, and professional staff in developing student content and performance standards in the common core of knowledge and skills through an officially adopted planning process reinforced by board of trustee policies. Districts may choose to adopt state standards using the board of trustees' official process that includes involving parents, community, and professional staff. (W.S. 21-9- 101(b)).” (emphasis added)

This rule specifically states that districts are commissioned with developing student content and performance standards, as long as they align with the state standards. Considering that the NEXT Generation Science Standards are copyrighted, if the State Board of Education adopts these standards, it strips the districts of their ability to fulfill this rule or forces the district to adopt the state standards. The rule states that districts “may choose to adopt state standards.” Is adopting a copyrighted set of state standards a legal choice for Wyoming?

(<http://www.nextgenscience.org/trademark-and-copyright-guidelines>)

I understand that the Board has been advised to adopt the NEXT Generation Science Standards into the review process by the Wyoming Department of Education and the review committee. It is my understanding that this is the ONLY set of science standards that have been considered for this review period. Although some may argue that these standards are “better” than the current Wyoming science standards, the principle question is not if they are “better” but if they are “right.”

These standards teach one worldview in the area of the origin of the universe, life, etc. This worldview can be considered a “religion” or “sect” by definition.

The Wyoming Constitution states in Article 7, Section 12. Sectarianism prohibited.

“No sectarian instruction, qualifications or tests shall be imparted, exacted, applied or in any manner tolerated in the schools of any grade or character controlled by the state, nor shall attendance be required at any religious service therein, nor shall any sectarian tenets or doctrines be taught or favored in any public school or institution that may be established under this constitution.”

The word “sect” is defined as “a group adhering to a distinctive doctrine.” And doctrine is defined as “a set of ideas or beliefs that are taught or believed to be true.”

The adoption of the NEXT Generation Science Standards would clearly be a violation of the state constitution.

Given the legal questions of the above information, I again ask you to vote no on the adoption of the NEXT Generation Science Standards into the review process.

Respectfully,

Concerned Mom

Wyoming