

Comments on NEDP by Nancy Rodland

I am addressing the constitutionality of the National External Diploma Program and its realignment with the Common Core, otherwise referred to as the NEDP, originally developed in 1975. During the March 11, 2015 Greene County School Board meeting, our School Superintendent shared a limited informational presentation about the NEDP produced by Thomas Jefferson Adult and Career Education-TJACE requesting the School Board's consideration to vote for implementing this adult education program as an alternate to the GED program in Greene County.

We are privileged to live in the area of our Virginia's Commonwealth where our founding Fathers' labored and constructed our National Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Declaration of Independence. The men who wrote the Constitution fought passionately over the balance of power between the states and the federal government. After the Bill of Rights was added, the tenth amendment of our United States Constitution is categorized as "Powers Retained by the States and the People" and reads as follows: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

In other words, we have a federal system of government where power is divided among local, state and national entities and the tenth amendment tells the national government that the people and the states retain every authority that is not mentioned in the Constitution. It appears over time our Congress and President have assumed more power than the Constitution grants them. Surely, it is up to the states and the people to make certain elected and appointed officials obey the law of the land and to limit their power in order to sustain our freedom.

Whereby, we may rightfully state the US Constitution gives authority to the states regarding education. The problem is that the federal government has always promoted monetary incentives for education to further their own agenda, even if distant in time. Central government appears to seek nationalizing our education at all levels. Currently, we have a Supreme Court that indicated it will not hear cases focusing on whether or not states should comply with federal law because the states ACCEPT FEDERAL FUNDING! The court views it as "settled law." This implies that once a state accepts federal funding, the state

must comply with the federal law with regards to the accepted funded program. With this stated, then we must understand that the NEDP identifies and defines itself as newly realigned with the Common Core.

What is the Common Core and why should we be concerned about it? For brevity's sake, the Common Core is federally driven education standards created, dictated, and designed by plan for adoption and implementation by all 50 states, therefore, governed and funded by the federal level when states participate in any federal program, or initiative, which according to constitutional law, should never be part of any state's education curriculum. Virginia has elected not to adopt the Common Core, so why would any Virginia county adopt the NEDP? In my opinion, Common Core alignment may as well be Common Core.

The federal government has the right to require FUNDED states to have standards. However, the state may choose their own standards, and this is what Virginia has done. Virginia has the Standards of Learning. The Common Core does not prevent the federal government from mandating funded states from adopting state standards.

I will point out that the NEDP is Common Core aligned having many depths of origination and embedded concepts and values, as one may discover with further investigation. The NEDP lessons and activities are not readily accessible for taxpayers to preview, understand, or evaluate, yet 70 competencies written at a ninth grade reading level are listed, and mostly general.

The following are only some programs or departments found in Virginia, other states, and nationally, with standards or assessments that align, realign or specifically rename and use the Common Core or by tying their adoption to Race to the Top funding or No Child Left Behind waivers, and/or support Common Core: NEDP, GED, Virginia Department of Education, SOL-Virginia Standards of Learning, CCR-College and Career Readiness, CASAS-Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems, The College Board, The ACT, The SAT, US Department of Education, Smarter Balance, PARCC, and others too lengthy to include.

One may even consider these a web of confusing jargon. BUT, not oddly, it appears that the only steadfast documents of Common Core-free governance are our tried and true VA and US Constitutions. Under the US Constitution, the federal government has no role in education policy.

Furthermore, the Greene County School Board site posts as an Agenda Item Proposal 10909, dated March 11, 2015, the fact that a graduating Greene County enrolled NEDP student will be awarded a diploma specifically from our Greene County Public School System based on work/employment experience and completing online competencies considered EASIER than the GED and are all self-directed, flexible, self-paced, and Common Core aligned. The Common Core in any part does not belong in our schools anywhere.

It is my opinion that we should all be concerned that even our currently enrolled high school students, particularly those considered at-risk, may be encouraged to quit high school for finding the NEDP more appealing because they can work at a job and receive diploma credit and not have to function with, nor be responsible to peers, teachers, or administrators. NEDP still requires self-direction on a computer, AND offers leisure at home or elsewhere. How does this develop communication and relationship skills required and admired in the real world? The NEDP refers to enrollees as 'clients', not 'students'. To me, that implies a profiting business versus educating people. These clients incur a high cost for participation and completion and then where lies the burden of cost to continue running the program? As a reminder to us, public school systems K-12 offer free, no-cost student education to all, as established by our locally revered Thomas Jefferson.

In addition, I personally believe the NEDP, to some degree, may devalue the merit based diplomas granted to our high school Seniors who have remained in school, successfully completed 13, or more, years of instructional requirements, and made applaudable decisions. As a solution, adult students may continue to enroll in the GED program as it has been available and updated since 1942. We, the taxpayers, do not need to pay for an alternative means of testing because some people feel the GED requirements are too difficult to pass. This is why we have standards already in place. Not everyone deserves a diploma. And we should not need to reinvent the wheel with exceptions. Voting FOR NEDP is inviting Pandora's box to open.

As an educator with two children graduated from our high school, and a firm believer and supporter of our US and Virginia State Constitutions, I strongly urge you to vote against adopting the Common Core realigned NEDP for Greene County, or any county, in order to uphold the tenth amendment of our US Constitution and NOT disregard our States' Rights granted to us, nor disrespect our United States of America's cherished Founding Fathers and liberty minded citizens.

Respectfully spoken, I thank you for your time and consideration.