



Texas AFT

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TESTIMONY OF ERIC HARTMAN
ON BEHALF OF TEXAS AFT
BEFORE THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
REGARDING CSCOPE
JANUARY 31, 2013

Members of Texas AFT from around the state have raised a number of concerns regarding CSCOPE and especially regarding their districts' use of CSCOPE. We want to share those concerns with you today.

Our members' main concern is that many districts are using the CSCOPE materials as a required script for their teachers to follow. Teachers say this practice does not leave room for teachers' professional judgment, especially regarding pace and sequence. Teachers are expected to differentiate their instruction according to what is best for their individual students, but little leeway is being granted to vary from the specific approaches set out in CSCOPE materials.

One teacher said: "Using CSCOPE in this manner is just exacerbating the problem of using an Industrial Revolution factory model of teaching for a generation that has moved on far beyond this one-size-fits-all style of teaching. 'For every complex problem, there is a simple solution that is absolutely wrong.' CSCOPE seems to be that simple solution to solve all of our education woes, but it is not a correct solution. The problems of education cannot be solved by having every teacher across the state doing the same thing at the same time in the same way."

Other comments from teachers agreed with the statement from one that "CSCOPE struggles to be a user-friendly program." Teachers cited difficulties in navigating the Web site, tardy updating of materials, and pages and pages of lesson descriptions that must be sifted to determine what actually needs to be taught on a given day. Others cited too few ready-to-copy resources and unreliable access to the resources on the site. Some experienced teachers report that at times CSCOPE materials lack rigor or are presented in a disjointed fashion.

Not all comments received were negative. It was suggested that CSCOPE may be most helpful for beginning teachers. Some teachers praised some of the individual lessons provided. Appreciation was expressed for the role of educational service centers in supporting instruction, notwithstanding problems seen with CSCOPE.

(more)

The big issue for our members clearly is that district administrators too often use CSCOPE lessons and standards as gospel and penalize teachers who attempt to meet the needs of their students by providing academic supports that are not from CSCOPE. The CSCOPE Web site states that "local decision-making determines the extent to which CSCOPE lessons may be used (if at all) and what other resources may be used for instruction." The problem lies with local administrators who turn CSCOPE into a straitjacket for teachers instead of treating CSCOPE appropriately as an additional resource in the teacher's toolbox.