



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on March 17, 2015

In Resignation, Oklahoma Teacher Blows Whistle on Common Core

In a scathing resignation letter about the issue, Oklahoma City math teacher Juli Sylvan blasted the [controversial Common Core standards](#) and exposed numerous serious problems with the Obama-backed scheme — including the fact that it is being quietly implemented in [apparent defiance of state law](#). Among the most troubling elements, according to Sylvan — a veteran teacher with more than two decades in the classroom — is the [data-mining of children](#), which she said she is not willing to facilitate. However, the problems with the administration-promoted national school standards are much more wide ranging. From using ineffective teaching methods and imposing a one-size-fits-all education model to doing away with individualism and confusing students, the Common Core disaster is growing even in Oklahoma. Unable to protect her students from the scheme any longer, Sylvan said her only remaining option was to resign from the profession she loves. Lawmakers are aware of the resignation and looking into the matter.



Sylvan’s resignation letter, sent to school-board members and other education officials, represents a damning indictment of the standards and the forces behind them. “Common Core is not simply a new method of teaching,” she explained in the letter, a copy of which was obtained by *The New American*. “It is a complete takeover of WHAT is taught in the public school system. It takes away the individual’s freedom and joy of learning because of the one size fits all approach. All students don’t learn or express themselves in the same way. Common Core tends to do away with individualism — which is one of the attributes that makes America great. Diversity is one of our greatest resources, but Common Core erodes this great strength by taking parents, teachers, and elected officials out of the decision making process.” [Similar warnings](#) have been issued by experts and educators nationwide.

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In fact, the outrage and disgust surrounding the standards — often ridiculed as “ObamaCore” by critics — was so intense in Oklahoma that lawmakers and the governor [passed a law ending Common Core in the state](#). “We cannot ignore the widespread concern of citizens, parents, educators and legislators who have expressed fear that adopting Common Core gives up local control of Oklahoma’s public schools,”



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Governor Mary Fallin said in signing the anti-Common Core law, which passed overwhelmingly in both houses of the legislature. “The words ‘Common Core’ in Oklahoma are now so divisive that they have become a distraction that interferes with our mission of providing the best education possible for our children.... We are capable of developing our own Oklahoma academic standards that will be better than Common Core.”

Nevertheless, quietly and under the radar, education officials have been proceeding with the implementation of the standards in seeming violation of state law, Sylvan and others say. The implications are massive — especially for Oklahoma teachers, parents, students, taxpayers, and elected officials who sought to protect the state from Common Core by banning it last year. Despite her best efforts to resist, Sylvan said the system has essentially been rigged to force resistant teachers to implement the national standards or face serious consequences, up to and including dismissal. The popular teacher also noted that she and many others have been in meetings where it was openly stated that Common Core would be implemented, even if by “simply changing the name.”

Among the key enforcement tools, she explained, citing official documents, is the “Teacher Leadership Effectiveness” (TLE) scheme to coerce teachers into Common Core submission. It goes beyond the TLE, though. “I was constantly being harassed and threatened with termination for not implementing Common Core components,” Sylvan told *The New American*, citing data collection, testing, teaching strategies aligned to Common Core, and more. “As a teacher in the classroom in that environment with constantly being harassed, my ability to protect my students from the Common Core was being rapidly diminished.” However, she could not in good conscience “promote or contribute to the implementation of Common Core,” she added.

In her letter explaining the decision, Sylvan even cited Lily Williams, a former law professor who escaped from Communist China. Williams has lambasted Common Core and the associated data-gathering for exhibiting many of the same qualities and attributes of the Beijing regime’s indoctrination system masquerading as “education.” From centralizing control over education to creating invasive files on every student that will follow them for life, Williams said the parallels are deeply troubling to her as a victim of communist tyranny who fled to the United States in pursuit of freedom. Sylvan, too, has grown beyond alarmed at what is happening to education under the Obama-backed Common Core regime. And it is only getting worse.

That is why, out of options, Sylvan felt forced to submit her resignation letter, teaching her final classes on March 6. In a phone interview with *The New American* the next day, Sylvan said she distributed her resignation letter among students, many of whom are also deeply concerned about Common Core and the data mining. She said that students in some of her classes applauded her decision to stand up against the scheme and thanked her for trying so hard to protect them. Multiple sources at the Oklahoma legislature also confirmed that lawmakers are aware of Sylvan’s resignation and her sharp criticism of what is going on in the schools regarding Common Core implementation. What actions may be taken, if any, remains unclear, though legislators are investigating.

In her many teacher evaluations over the years, Sylvan has always been given the highest assessments, so education officials know that she is an effective instructor — that is not the problem. “But now, I am being singled out for refusing to do what Oklahoma Law prohibits,” she wrote in the letter, referring to the implementation of Common Core. “I believe the problems we have in education stem from the takeover of education by the federal government. We in Oklahoma do not need to be told how to educate our children. We are capable of determining that for ourselves. I cannot promote a system that



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violates the law and the rights of students and their parents. Children's and parents' personal information is being mined through testing and surveys preparing them as human capital for the 21st century workforce for stockholders and 'stakeholders.'" And that is not acceptable, she said.

"Although the system of Common Core is many things, the most commonly discussed are the standards which are incomplete and vague at best," Sylvan told *The New American*. "An example is it teaches mathematical steps out of order and leaves out steps. Math is not taught at developmentally appropriate ages and it's disguised as rigor and readiness. The results are students become confused and discouraged as well as receive an incomplete education." Indeed, Sylvan is hardly alone in her criticism of the math standards. Professor James Milgram of Stanford, the only math subject-matter expert selected to sit on the Common Core Validation Committee, refused to sign off on the standards, citing, among other concerns, incorrect math.

Beyond the poor standards and methods, Sylvan also zeroed in her criticism on the [Orwellian data-mining component](#) of the so-called "education reform" agenda pushed from Washington. "The Common Core standards are also used as a distraction to deceptively justify or defend the collection of student data," she said. Much of the data collection occurs through the ([unconstitutional](#)) testing regime, she continued, echoing the concerns of numerous experts and analysts. "Unfortunately, testing is now being used to gather personal data about the student and/or the student's family," Sylvan wrote in the letter. "Tests are collecting information far more extensive and invasive than merely tracking academic performance."

Among the personal data being vacuumed up on students is information on the beliefs of children and parents, mental problems, attitudes, behavior, religion, and more, she said, citing government documents. Sylvan also noted that the so-called "stimulus" program, which provided much of the bribe money used to impose Common Core on states, demands that the data-gathering systems have the capability to track everything from pre-school to the workforce and beyond. "This data is being used to track and put students on a path that may be detrimental to what they and their parents desire," Sylvan added in the letter. The Obama administration cryptically refers to it as the "cradle-to-career" agenda.

After 22 years of teaching, Sylvan told the school board and education officials that she was very sad to see what was being allowed to happen to schools and to the nation more broadly. "I pray that we will end this nonsense and return to the principle that made American great," she said. "Because of this I feel I must resign from a job that I have passionately pursued and must leave students that have been my life's work." Of course, Sylvan is hardly the first educator to resign over Common Core. What makes her story especially noteworthy, though, is that it happened in one of the states that supposedly repealed Common Core.

In an e-mail to *The New American*, Jenni White of Restore Oklahoma Public Education (ROPE), which played a key role in getting the legislature to repeal Common Core, said she was well aware of the ongoing problems with the standards being implemented in Oklahoma. "It's true that passing a single law against a national initiative will not remove it from any state," she explained, citing a [recent blog post](#) she wrote underscoring how Common Core was alive and well in the state despite the law supposedly undoing it. "But then, this is the reason why sovereign states should not cede their control to the federal government for money or programming or anything else. Common Core is such a far-reaching initiative that it's almost impossible now for states who try to escape its clutches not to have it brought back into the state in one form or another from textbooks to testing."



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Still, while the task of uprooting the scheme may be enormous, critics of Common Core say stopping the scheme must be done. The future of America and liberty might literally hang in the balance.

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