

New Hampshire bill requires cursive, multiplication tables

5 March 2015, by Kathleen Ronayne

As schools adopt new education standards and rely more on computers in the classroom, a group of New Hampshire senators want to make sure the basics of learning cursive and multiplication tables don't get left behind.

"You definitely need to teach typing and keyboarding and all of that, but kids do need to be able to sign their names, they do need to be able to read the Founding Fathers documents," said Republican Sen. Nancy Stiles, the main sponsor of a bill that would require [public schools](#) to keep teaching both. "(Cursive) is an art and a skill that shouldn't be lost."

The push to keep cursive in the classroom has become a nationwide movement as schools adopt the Common Core education standards, which omit mention of the handwriting style. The K-12 standards, adopted by most states, have drawn widespread criticism. Among other objections, opponents say, the standards complicate math education and take away local and state control over school instruction.

New Hampshire senators on Thursday passed the state bill on a voice vote and sent it on to a finance committee to assess any possible costs. North Carolina previously passed legislation on cursive and multiplication, and several other states have taken up bills to require cursive.

Stiles said she submitted the bill at the request of two constituents, and opponents of Common Core say the legislation only begins to scratch the surface of problems with the standards.

"The legislators are now hearing from parents who are finding flaw after flaw after flaw," said Ann Marie Banfield, education liaison for Cornerstone Action, a conservative advocacy group.

But opponents of the measure say it's unnecessary and misguided because curriculum decisions in

New Hampshire have always been made at the local level. State Board of Education Chairman Tom Raffio said the state has no plans to move schools away from teaching cursive or multiplication tables, but noted that cursive has never been required by New Hampshire standards.

"How you learn to write, how you learn to multiply, is decided at the local level, as is all curriculum and instructional practices, as it has always been," Raffio said.

Sharon McCrone, acting chair of the University of New Hampshire's math and statistics department, said knowing multiplication tables is an important building block for students to learn advanced math, but said it's critical that students have good "number sense" and understand how to arrive at answers in the tables. She said that understanding helps students apply math to everyday life, like figuring out how much to pay for 1 pound of grapes if a sign says "5 pounds for \$2," McCrone said.

Democratic Sen. Molly Kelly, the only lawmaker to speak against the bill, said she opposes it because nothing in state law prohibits schools from teaching either skill. "I think that sometimes we go too far in what we legislate," she said. "I think this is one of those bills that is not necessary."

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