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A HISTORY LESSON ON CSCOPE

The recent dust up about CSCOPE, like a lot of things in education today, is part conspiracy theory and part amnesia. To help get this artificial controversy behind us, I'd like to offer a historical perspective on this issue.

CSCOPE was first created in 2006 in response to requests from educators across the state that wanted assistance in covering TEKS adopted by the State Board of Education. Educators needed help navigating the increasingly complex sets of standards to ensure compliance with state requirements and prepare their students for the state's mandated tests. I applaud their desire to meet and exceed the state's requirements.

CSCOPE was created by a Regional Service Center so every district in the state didn't have to re-invent the wheel every time, which would result in massive duplication of effort. I would think lawmakers and the public would applaud this type of consolidation and efficiency, not condemn it.

CSCOPE was also created in a time when Regional Service Centers were responding to a legislative directive to become more self-sufficient and not solely rely on legislative appropriations for their budget. Again, you would think lawmakers would be applauding this response to their request. Maybe some lawmakers aren't aware of this because it occurred before they arrived at the legislature.

CSCOPE is created by teachers and for teachers, with constant feedback from teachers. This is not some nefarious plot to hide content from parents or hide from the open records laws. This always has been and always will be a resource for teachers to use, along with other resources like textbooks, continuing education, online content, etc. There is no single resource that eliminates the need for the others. CSCOPE is no exception.

CSCOPE is not designed to eliminate textbooks or other instructional materials. It is designed to complement them for the benefit of the teacher and the student.

CSCOPE does limit access to some of its content, just like the Dallas Morning News, iTunes, the Texas Legislature, and many other entities. Some of the information is available to the public free of charge, while other information is behind the “pay wall” as part of a business plan. Again, this is, in part, a response to a legislative directive to develop methods of becoming self-sufficient. It’s ironic that we hear candidates talking about government being “run like a business,” but when government does it, some people apparently don’t like it.

SB 6 had absolutely nothing to do with a school district’s ability to use CSCOPE. Again, CSCOPE was created in 2006. SB 6 was passed in 2011. Districts have been using local tax dollars to purchase CSCOPE for years. SB 6 simply allowed districts more flexibility on how to use state instructional materials funding. In my opinion, CSCOPE is definitely an “instructional material” as defined by this Texas law passed overwhelmingly by the Legislature.

CSCOPE may look like a “one-size-fits-all” approach to learning, but how would SBOE oversight change that? Every textbook the SBOE approves falls under this same “one-size-fits-all” approach. I would much rather have 7,000 locally elected school board members decide what content is best for their students, not the 15-member SBOE. Allowing CSCOPE to be developed and implemented at the local level is the “local control” Texans say we want. Injecting SBOE oversight into this would shift us into a “controlling the locals” approach.

I hope this helps shed some light on this situation and we can get back to meeting the REAL challenges facing our public schools.