



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on May 21, 2013

## Texas Drops “Anti-American” CSCOPE Lessons; Battle Continues

A highly controversial school curriculum used in much of Texas known as “CSCOPE,” which came under relentless assault from activists and parents who [said it was promoting “progressive” anti-American and anti-Christian propaganda](#), was dealt a major blow by policymakers this week. However, despite media reports and legislators heralding the death of the divisive educational program, major elements remain in place. Still, the news was lauded as a victory for common-sense education as the national battle over Obama-backed “Common Core” standards heats up.



The CSCOPE program was touted online by its developers as a “customizable, online curriculum management system” for Texas schools. Despite being used in more than two thirds of state school districts, the scheme largely flew under the radar — at least for a while — until a broad coalition of concerned parents, teachers, political activists, Tea Party groups, and others eventually cried foul.

The system surged into the [national spotlight](#) earlier this year when conservative media outlets began exposing the curriculum contents, which critics lambasted as everything from “Marxist” indoctrination to “pro-Islam” attacks on Christianity. Others complained that parents were not allowed to access the material due to “licensing” restrictions.

Produced by the Texas Education Service Center Curriculum Collaborative (TESCCC), the lesson plans included, [for example](#), an assignment to design a new communist flag based on symbols used by socialist regimes. A controversial handout for “social studies,” meanwhile, portrayed humanity as evolving upward from a purportedly selfish free-market economic system toward socialism. The final step was communism, where, supposedly, “all people work together for everyone.” Another lesson suggested the famous Boston Tea Party could be considered an act of terrorism.

Among the most controversial elements of the entire scandal were school materials that critics viewed as [hostile toward Christianity](#). One lesson plan, for instance, introduced the Christian religion as a “cult,” even suggesting that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ described in the Bible represented repackaged versions of Egyptian and Persian mythology — an absurd notion that has been debunked by countless scholars and theologians. Opponents also blasted what they said was a “pro-Islam” bias in the lesson plans.

After the state-wide outcry turned into a national scandal, Texas lawmakers, under heavy pressure from constituents, eventually got involved in the issue. On Monday, months after the furor first erupted, legislators and TESCCC board members announced during a press conference that CSCOPE was essentially dead. The entity responsible for producing the material, meanwhile, will no longer be producing lesson plans or curriculums. Policymakers seemed delighted to put the controversy behind



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them.

"I'm pleased that the CSCOPE Board has made the decision to get out of the lesson plan business," [said](#) Republican State Senator Dan Patrick, the chairman of the Senate Education Committee who led much of the effort to stop the scheme. "This is a positive development for students, parents, teachers, and for the Regional Service Centers. I want to thank the members of the Senate Education Committee for their months of work on this issue. I also want to thank Attorney General Abbott and his staff in providing valuable assistance in our review of CSCOPE."

Sen. Patrick of Houston noted that once the TESCCC board officially approves the measure later this week, he would notify the state Board of Education that they no longer needed to review the 1,600 CSCOPE lesson plans. "The CSCOPE era is over," the senator continued. "However, what the last several months has proven is that the state will have to create a plan to monitor all online material in the future so that our schools and classroom remain completely transparent to parents and the legislature knows what is being taught in our classrooms across Texas."

TESCCC Chair Anne Poplin and other board members thanked Sen. Patrick and his fellow lawmakers on the state House and Senate education committees, saying their leadership had been "invaluable" and that they look forward to having a "positive relationship" in the future. "We believe that this is the best decision moving forward, and allows us to continue to provide high-quality services to the more than 1,000 school districts and charter schools in Texas," Poplin and another board member said in a [statement](#).

While spokesmen for the entity responsible for CSCOPE originally defended the material, it appears that the support softened as critics' outcry grew louder. More recently, officials across the state rushed to distance themselves from the program as well. Conservative activists, meanwhile, celebrated the latest developments, with some arguing that more work was needed to rein in out-of-control educational bureaucrats and prevent similar occurrences.

"Never underestimate the power of blogs and grassroots pressure from conservatives in Texas!" [wrote](#) longtime CSCOPE critic David Bellow, a Texas Republican Executive Committeeman who has been blasting the program for months in online articles. "We must not let our guard down though and the Texas Legislature needs to continue to take action to prevent bad curriculum and an online backdoor curriculum from being introduced into Texas schools with no oversight."

Not everyone was celebrating, however. State Board of Education Vice Chairman Thomas Ratliff of Northeast Texas was among those expressing concerns. "I'm already getting emails from superintendents and teachers at my districts saying, 'Now, what?'" Ratliff said in a [statement](#). "There were 1,600 lessons in that thing. That's not easily replaceable.... For some districts, they are a small, optional part. For other districts, it was a lifeline. It's a sad day for small school districts and the state, and it's all because of politics."

As CSCOPE critics celebrated the small victory and its backers complained, some media reports and officials suggested that the death of the program might not have arrived yet. Indeed, even though the controversial lesson plans will be taken down, the federally funded "Regional Education Centers" will continue to operate, and "management portions" of CSCOPE will remain available to school districts, according to [media reports](#).

Even SBOE Vice Chair Ratliff noted that the "heftier" elements of the scheme, which outline the K-12 government-mandated requirements and the timelines for learning them, remain intact. "So, yes, the



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rumors of their death have been exaggerated,” Ratliff was [quoted as saying](#) in the *Longview News-Journal*. “It is not CSCOPE that’s going away; it’s just that one component.” The element that has been banished: the controversial but optional lesson plans. Everything else essentially remains in place.

To prevent a similar situation — Texas children being taught anti-American or anti-Christian propaganda — lawmakers are working on a bill, Senate Bill 1406, to provide more oversight of CSCOPE. The bill passed a third reading in the state House, and opponents of the controversial lesson plans are urging activists to [back the legislation](#). Because CSCOPE still exists and will continue to be offered at Texas schools, Republican state Rep. Steve Toth also [said](#) he planned to continue pushing the legislation.

The 20-member governing board in charge of CSCOPE, meanwhile, is asking lawmakers to pass House Bill 1675, which would keep the federally funded “Regional Education Centers” open until 2019. Even anti-CSCOPE lawmakers indicated that they did not see a problem with the program, local media outlets [reported](#). Why Texas or any other state would need or want unconstitutional federal funding for its education programs remains unclear — especially considering the “strings” that are almost always attached.

As the education battle over CSCOPE was heating up in Texas, a much larger fight was brewing nationwide — the effort to stop the Obama administration-backed “Common Core” standards. The controversial effort, which has [relied mostly on federal bribes and bullying](#), aims to [track students](#) and [standardize education across America](#) by getting state governments to adopt the widely criticized standards. Some 45 states — not including Texas — have already signed up for the plan, but over a dozen so far are considering withdrawal. Activists and experts [say](#) that battle is just getting started.

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