

Dear Honorable Members of the Connecticut State Legislature:

As a Special Education Teacher, I must rise to state my opposition to the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in the state of Connecticut. First, a little history.

Common Core, as the standards are commonly referred to as, were written by a panel that included no educators or anyone with childhood development experience. The Core was not publicly vetted, nor has its standards or tests been validated. I'm a teacher, and recall it wasn't too long ago that we only implemented scientific, researched-based methods in the classroom. The Core is not based on science or supported by research, yet educators such as myself and others have been told to implement these standards and forget the science. It's akin to committing malpractice.

As noted education historian Diane Ravitch has suggested, "Common Core is an answer to a problem that doesn't exist." The question then becomes, how did Connecticut and 44 other states and Washington, DC get duped into implementing CCSS? The answer to this question is simply follow the money. After the Great Recession of 2008, current Secretary of Education Arne Duncan told states, many of which were hemorrhaging money, that the federal government would chip in its 10% of funding, if, and only if, states would agree to implement these invalid standards. The decision was left not in the hands of local schools or even by the Legislature, rather here in Connecticut, it was decided by two people, the elected governor of Connecticut, Dan Malloy, and his appointed Education Commissioner Stefan Pryor. Pryor himself is not an educator nor does he possess credentials in education, yet he holds this office overseeing the State's students, teachers, and administrators.

It would be too simple if this disaster was just promoted by those who have zero credibility as educators such as Malloy, Pryor, and Duncan. Again, one needs to simply follow the money. CCSS was funded by billionaires such as Bill Gates, Eli Broad, and the Koch Brothers, with legislative support from the shadowy, far-right group ALEC, and uses the venomous mouthpieces of anti-public education advocates, such as disgraced former DC Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee and Teach for America founder Wendy Kopp to promote its propaganda. All collude to promote the falsehood that America's schools are "failing," yet they continue to ignore the facts. After all, if you look at scores of valid and researched standardized tests such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), scores of students in all categories across this country are up, including our African American and Hispanic students, and have been going up, for some time. All of these Core supporters have, at best, ulterior motives for backing the CCSS. You see, if you add the amount of funding spent on education by all states and the federal government, the amount is in excess of \$800 billion. That's why Gates and his like see public schools as an opportunity to privatize public education, and make a ton of dough doing so. They don't see students in a classroom as a place to facilitate creativity and lifelong learning rather they see our kids as mere "datapoints," to mine information from, and teachers, administrators, parents, and teacher unions as stumbling blocks to claw their greedy hands of all those billions of dollars.

As for my kids and all students of all ability levels across the State, CCSS is designed to fail them. The standards are grossly inappropriate for childhood development, but in particular, these Standards are damaging to my students who have special needs. With CCSS, there is no flexibility or accommodating for my students, many of whom are in fourth-grade, but are barely reading at a Kindergarten level. It sets them up for failure which is morally repugnant. In addition, CCSS and its supporters belittle the factors that greatly affect my students, who live in the inner city and are plagued with violence, domestic dysfunction, poverty, hunger, drug abuse by adults, and other social and economic factors on a daily basis. Until we address these issues, my kids will continue the cycle of misery. No test will change that.

It is time for reason, sanity, and science return to Connecticut's public schools. That begins with the removal of CCSS and its toxic high-stakes testing environment that is contributing to great teachers leaving this noble profession, a profession I love and care deeply about. In addition, the Core standards replaced standards in place that promoted critical thinking skills, an essential requirement in today's global economy. CCSS supporters would rather have our kids emulate China's broken educational system which teaches to the the test. Students there don't really learn, but they do become expert at filling in test answer bubble sheets. I say we can, and have done, better. It's time to get rid of the Common Core in Connecticut.

Sincerely,  
Adam Silver  
71 Aiken Street, Apt. Q5  
Norwalk, CT 06851  
(203) 956-9871