

## Testimony: March 12, 2014

I am Liz Natale, author of [“Why I Want to Give Up Teaching,”](#) which was published in *The Hartford Courant* on January 17, 2014, and viewed well more than a half million times by teachers across Connecticut and the country. I would love to testify in person, but I am at Sedgwick Middle School in West Hartford teaching children during your hearing.

While many teachers support the notion of Common Core, it is unrealistic to believe that all students will progress at the same rate. For years, differentiation in classrooms has been our goal. Common Core is the antithesis of differentiation. What do schools do when a student does not move up a “step,” as Common Core supposes? Will students be retained?

One of the most disturbing aspects of Common Core is the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium computerized testing. Not all students own computers, which puts them at a disadvantage in manipulating the complicated computer program. One goal of Common Core is to close the achievement gap. How does having disadvantaged students take a high-stakes test on a computer do that? How will already struggling students feel when they are faced with a test that surely will discourage them? The Connecticut Mastery Test was designed to give students the chance to demonstrate what they learned; it was possible to earn perfect scores. The SBAC will not give students that chance. Does it make sense to give a child a test that is designed to be too difficult, that asks them questions on material they have not learned, that is designed to show them what they don't know?

Linking teacher evaluation to these tests is totally ridiculous. Student success cannot be reduced to a number; teacher performance cannot be reduced to a number. The tests are ill-conceived and unproven, and linking them to evaluations is insulting.

In general, Connecticut schools are not failing. Why fix something that isn't broken? The state should leave successful schools to continue doing what they already do well and focus resources on helping underperforming schools become successful.

If schools are not living up to your expectations, teachers are not the reason. Teachers are not the problem. We are trying to fix the problem. The combination of Common Core, SBAC testing, and teacher evaluation will surely break a functioning system and children are the ones who will suffer.

Elizabeth A. Natale  
Glastonbury, CT  
Teacher of English/language arts  
Grades 6 and 7  
Sedgwick Middle School—West Hartford, CT