

Remarks of Julie O'Connell  
Grade 4 Teacher  
S.B. Butler, Groton Public Schools

Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education  
Concerning the proposed changes to Common Core State Standards Implementation  
and Teacher Evaluation

March 12, 2014

Good afternoon. My name is Julie O'Connell and I'm a fourth grade teacher in Groton Public Schools. I have taught elementary school for almost ten years. Without a doubt, this year has proved to be the most stressful of my career. Although I love teaching and my students are wonderful, we are asking too much of them too soon. The Common Core State Standards are not developmentally appropriate at the elementary level. It is quite apparent elementary teachers were not consulted when these standards were developed. We need to build a solid educational foundation for our children before we raise the expectations so high that they are unable to attain them. This only assures that what they are reaching are not high test scores, but an extremely high level of frustration and intense dislike for school. In addition to being a teacher, I am a mother of two boys enrolled in Connecticut Public Schools, one at the elementary level and one at the middle school level, and I am not only seeing this in the classroom, but in my own home as well. These children are human beings, not robots designed to be "test ready." What happened to creative thinking and problem solving? As a child, I loved attending school, and it saddens me to think that children going to school now are not continuing this love of education, especially at the elementary level. There is something wrong, and it needs to be corrected. Furthermore, the new evaluation plan for teachers needs to be looked at more carefully. Teachers as well as administrators are being asked to

spend hours to complete paperwork for these evaluations. Personally, I spent over six hours filling out paperwork and uploading it for a thirty minute observation, and that didn't account for the pre-observation and post-observation paperwork and meetings. This was all for only a thirty minute lesson out of an entire week of lessons that needed to be prepared. The teacher evaluation plan is taking valuable time away from the planning and instruction that is necessary for the success of the students. While I am aware there needs to be some sort of evaluation plan in place, it's certainly not this particular one. Changes need to be made to the CCSS and the teacher evaluation process to ensure the success of Connecticut Public Schools and the children that are a part of these schools. Thank you for your consideration.