

*Jill S. Greenberg, Ph.D.; 91 East Avenue-3rd floor; Norwalk, CT 06851;
(203) 505-8726
jsgreenb@optonline.net*

3/10/2014

Re: Common Core State Standards

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for this opportunity to articulate my concerns about the current state of education, particularly as it relates to the CCSS, evaluating student learning and evaluating teacher adequacy/skill.

I am a psychologist who has also recently completed school administrator training through the UCAPP program at UCONN. I have, previously worked in schools in many parts of the country, but I am now in private practice. My practice is exclusively psychological evaluations and some executive function coaching for high school and middle school age students.

There are those who think the CCSS are generally terrific and they are excited about the improved rigor, training, and continuity in their middle schools and High school system. I have grave concerns, though, about these standards, especially at the lower grades. Moreover, whether the educator is finding the standards helpful in elevating education in his/her school or not there is universal distress about testing aligned to the standards and teacher evaluations aligned to test results.

It was once the case that the majority of students I tested were children with learning disabilities who were struggling in school but were somehow not getting the attention they required. Now, my case load looks quite different. The majority of children I see are average in most ways, with a vulnerability in one way or another. They come to me because they are struggling or failing in school. They come to me because they are so anxious they can't think, they can't get work done, they are refusing to engage in school learning. They say they hate school. Hearing this from a 7 year old is quite alarming.

There are many problems with the standards which I believe can be addressed by giving the control to teachers. We have to remember that the standards were not written by educators. There was no real attention paid to developmental progression, a fault of using a backwards design and a misconception that young children are merely short versions of their later selves.

Another huge problem is that the standards are so complex they require "Unpacking" Anything that is so complex is probably wrong. The best ideas are elegantly simple. But, if we are to embrace such complexity, then deep, thoughtful analysis is required. Teachers and administrators need time to consider each standard and how to best teach the skills and knowledge implied by the standard. I want to know when the last time

*Jill S. Greenberg, Ph.D.; 91 East Avenue-3rd floor; Norwalk, CT 06851;
(203) 505-8726
jsgreenb@optonline.net*

was you bought an expensive item: a house, a car; or made a major decision, who to marry, whether to change jobs, without deep thoughtful consideration and good research? What is the research that has been conducted concerning these standards? None, so far. How closely aligned with best practice and years of research about how students learn are those standards? At the lowest grades- not at all. WHY would you inflict upon our children something unresearched when you put so much energy into these other important decision for yourselves?

Moving beyond the unresearched standards that were not designed by educators, are too complex to understand, and are not tied to immutable developmental processes, there are curricula and tests. The curricula, tied to untested standards are what bring those children to my office. Especially young children, but all those I have been seeing complain that the pace is too fast, they don't have time to absorb and embrace what is being taught. They feel confused and overwhelmed. These standards as expressed through curricula leave no room for variation in learning. So more than ever, average children feel distressed, stupid, turned off. They know they are being taught to a test, not to a goal of loving learning and learning deeply.

Part of the problem is that teachers are being asked to teach to these complex standards using developmentally inappropriate language and tasks. Moreover teachers are not yet fully trained and are learning as they go. In some districts they are working without proper materials.

Assessment of such "education" is, in actuality, assessment of the highest levels of administration not of teachers. Teachers do not have control over their PD, the materials they receive, the curricula they are told to teach. So assessing teachers based on developmentally inappropriate standards, taught through ill-prepared, rushed curricula; and assessing students on these same features is analogous to medical malpractice. Would you go to a physician who was qualified but lacked training and the equipment and experience to conduct a needed surgery? And if that physician conducted the surgery and botched because s/he had been poorly trained, provided with subpar or inadequate facilities, and had been forced by his/her superior to do the job who would you say is at fault, really?

To conclude everything needs to slow down. Well researched best practices should be implemented, teachers and other educators should be given top control over the analysis of the standards and the curricula used in their school (as is the case in countries such as Finland). With no evidence that the barrage of testing children experience is beneficial to the learning process, and good evidence that high stakes testing is detrimental to learning and instruction why are we proceeding with the

*Jill S. Greenberg, Ph.D.; 91 East Avenue-3^d floor; Norwalk, CT 06851;
(203) 505-8726
jsgreenb@optonline.net*

current trend? I am pretty sure money, big business, and politics far trumps tending to the best interest of the next generation.

If we took all the money currently going into schools to ready children for untested tests untested curricula, and untested methods of instruction and instead tied school improvement to those factors known to increase learning for all we would have all the money we need to do the job. You know as well as I that what matters is teacher training, class size, health and welfare of children and their families, and strong early childhood programs. During the era of the Great Society we all experienced improved education, all strata of society. The gap between white and black, rich and poor was closing. If it isn't politics and the pressures of big money players in politics please show me what evidence there is that the path you are taking our children and teachers down can do at least as well as those well tested intervention methods? And if you can't show the real data to support your decisions, STOP and obtain what you need to make these grave decisions for the future of our children and our democracy.

Thank you,
Jill S. Greenberg, Ph. D.