

March 11, 2014

Education Committee  
Room 3100, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear members of the Education Committee,

I am a parent and teacher of children in the CT Public School system. I live the realities of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) from many directions, and I can assure you that CT public schools are not going down the right path with these forced, untested, unproven, universal, one-size Common Core State Standards. Please look at NYS, learn from their mistakes and I plead with you not make the same ones.

From a personal perspective, I have seen how the test-driven mentality of schools has slowly made my own children dislike school. My daughter used to love school, but this year she has used the word "hate" on various occasions, and it breaks my heart. She has lost the joy of learning amidst the destructive political games being played in our State and Federal governments. This is inexcusable! The CCSS are NOT in our children's best interest and any veteran educator or psychologist can tell you the same thing. They are HARMFUL! If they are SO good, why aren't private schools following them?

As a professional, in my 13<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, I have never seen such low morale from both teachers and students. Schools aren't a happy and safe place anymore. Teachers are overwhelmed with all the new curricula and trying the best they can to align everything-and-anything with CC. Of course we need "guidelines" to follow as we plan and teach our kids, but these should not be so constricted and rigid as are Common Core. We need TIME to learn new curriculum. Students need TIME to learn anything that is new to them. We need TIME to TEACH. These Standards and the accompanying SBAC Field Test, have been rushed too quickly and we need to stop it before more devastation is caused. The state is NARROWING our children's learning and taking away VALUABLE teaching and learning, by promoting unproven, educational policies. The hands that feed them, with no assistance, yet again force local Districts to follow policies that are harmful to children. This needs to stop!

If we continue to follow shallow, narrow-minded, robotic initiatives, which include these useless SBAC assessments and the CCSS, we will lose an entire generation of open-minded, intellectual and creative human beings! Creative thinking cannot be measured by multiple-choice questions.

I will end with a quote from Wendy Lecker, attorney and columnist at the Stamford Advocate, which expresses what I believe to be the sad truth of education "reform" in CT.

*"One of the most distressing characteristics of education reformers is that they are hyper-focused on how students perform, but they ignore how students learn."*  
~Wendy Lecker

Our children are this Nation's FUTURE! Start focusing on their LEARNING, the way educators know how to, not politicians, and stop focusing on performance and data points, please. We are not dealing with manufactured "products," we are dealing with human minds and spirits!

I support H.B. No. 5078 (COMM) AN ACT IMPOSING A MORATORIUM ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS, with reservations. We need to STOP Common Core, but we also need to safeguard local district control of curricula, and not ever relinquish this right to the State or Federal governments.

I also support H.B. No. 5331 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REVISIONS TO THE PEAC GUIDELINES. Teachers need to have flexibility in both teaching and learning without so much red tape that affects children's learning!

Please know that my heart is heavy and my passion is the driving force behind my ideas, which, in the big picture, are more like common sense!

Sincerely,  
Natasha DiPiro