

March 11, 2014

Dear Education Committee:

I am writing as both a parent and an educator in regards to the Common Core State Standards/SBAC. My concern lies in the de-emphasis on creativity in the child as districts interpret the standards to enforce a climate of literacy being the sole discipline worthy of time on task in the classroom. As an elementary art teacher, I am committed to bringing my students a rich, rigorous experience in the visual arts. From heart-wrenching discussions with fifth-graders who understand the self-loathing and co-dependency of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo to heart-warming collage portraits of loved ones by my kindergarteners, I believe that we do include expression, responding, evaluation, analyzing and so much more in our studies. However, as instructional time in the arts is pared away by the districts, the 27 hours a school year that each student is allowed to spend in my class is insufficient to meet the new demands of Common Core without significantly decreasing content learning. By including a shared (albeit one-way) responsibility of including literacy instruction within my class time, I have had to decrease the instructional time spent on fine art content, skills, elements and principles as delineated in the National Art Standards. I am a firm believer in interdisciplinary teaching and structure my lessons around this school of thought but not at the expense of artistic and creative content. I teach all students of all academic levels and for many of my students who may struggle in their academic subject, I create a safe environment for them to express their ideas without words. Without citing evidence. Without directional flow. I allow them to express their ideas just because it is what they feel...and that is not assessable, nor is it worthless because it doesn't fall in line with the proper mechanics of a literacy standard. When deciding about moving forward with the implementation of CCSS, please consider the effect that it will have on creativity and expression of each individual student. Other countries believe that the one thing that our country does do correctly in regards to education is our ability to foster creativity in our students. Let creativity remain to be our educational legacy.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tina Taylor

Waterbury Public Schools