

Hello,

I have been an art teacher in the East Hartford district for almost ten years. I have seen much change and reform in education in the last decade, but nothing as devastating as the TEVAL plan we have adopted in our district and state wide. The plan sounds good in theory, but it's now apparent this is not the best way to give our kids a quality and well rounded education.

I loved teaching the arts. The arts are a child's escape from academic subjects that has only one right or wrong answer, or leaves the child with lack of creativity or an "outlet" from the everyday subjects they may be struggling in. Though all subjects are connected and important, I appreciate that I can teach a subjective and creative topic. This year it seems my art class has now been replaced with rigorous testing, including a September pre-test, November testing, mid-year testing, March check-in testing, and now April assessments in every grade level K-5. I feel I've had to put so many quality interdisciplinary and cultural lessons aside in order to TEST my students on art knowledge and terms. I MISS teaching art!!! The kids MISS creating art!

As trained and capable educators, we want to redirect teacher evaluation in Connecticut so that it is student based. We want to refocus it on what teachers do on a regular basis and how teachers assess student growth on a continuing basis. And we want to allow teachers to focus their energy on what they know matters most—planning and providing engaging instruction for their students.

I never thought my job would consist of hours spent on testing in art class, or finding myself spending endless hours on paperwork and compliance as required by the state. With the enormous and unreasonable demands of the state system, our attention is being diverted from students' learning needs.

I know reform is a must in education, but can be done with a holistic, qualitative approach that trusts educators by enabling them to set student goals for growth and assess their students' growth. Please reconsider the TEVAL for a better future for both teachers and students.

Thank You,
Elisabeth Finnegan