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To Those Who Are Concerned About Our Public Schools;

The United States should be educating students to become well-adjusted, self-sufficient citizens who make positive contributions to society.

Imagine that Warren Buffett got together with a handful of university researchers who have never performed surgery and decided to rewrite the surgical texts, decide how surgeries should be performed and double the number of tests given to patients. Well as ridiculous as that sounds that is similar to what is going on in education. The Common Core was developed by a group of people who do not understand child development or education.

The Common Core was written by people who do not have an understanding of child development and think that if we just push students harder they will learn more. Unfortunately, education does not work that way and anyone who is a true educator will tell you that. If you take a close look at the Common Core it is riddled with developmentally inappropriate expectations. Beginning in kindergarten abstract understanding is expected. Research shows that children at this age are not capable of abstract conceptualization. Young children are developing cognition on a concrete level.

Rigor has taken over public education. The thinking that children can learn anything at any age is ridiculous. This idea is one of the major flaws found in the Common Core. Teachers understand what and how students learn. Math concepts that were taught in fifth grade in the past are now part of the third grade math curriculum. Tests show that third grade students have tremendous difficulty understanding fifth grade math concepts. This inappropriate curriculum is also having a negative impact on the self esteem and confidence of our young learners.

A specific example of inappropriate expectations emerged in a recent professional develop meeting at my school. The third grade teachers gathered together to hear a presentation about the existing math program. One teacher stated that the program is not developmentally appropriate. Another teacher shared that her students told her at the beginning of the school year that they were good math students but now they don't feel smart. Parents are sending in notes saying their children can't do the homework. The presenters who are math teachers had two points to make. The first was that students only have to have an essential understanding which is another way of saying they don't have to deep understand the problems. The other point was to instill perseverance in students. When teachers were presented with similar math problems they became frustrated. The way this will be presented to students is to give them a math problem that is too

difficult and expect them to keep on working on it (without any direct instruction). The teachers were given a 4th grade problem. It was extremely difficult and instead of experiencing perseverance we experienced frustration and gave up. This math curriculum is aligned with the common core. This strategy is not only ridiculous but can be detrimental to student learning and confidence. Long division used to be taught in 5th grade but is now taught in 3rd grade. We are wasting valuable instructional time trying to teach students skills that they really don't understand. Third graders can spit back algorithms but they don't understand long division.

Another issue that is having a negative impact is too much testing. As a special educator, my students take assessments in the resource room where they are allowed extended time. Some assessments are short but others can take as long as two hours. These assessments are not providing important information needed for instruction but are taking away from needed instruction and making students feel a lack of confidence in their abilities. On a given week, our third graders may have four or five tests in the areas of math, reading, writing and spelling. These tests may take up to 4 hours. Time can be better spent in instruction. A kindergarten teacher recently shared that one of her students was nervous and asked if they were taking a test today. Kindergarten students shouldn't be worried about taking tests!

One of our psychologists has coined the phrase "curriculum disabled". This means that the curriculum is too difficult which results in the student failing. This student will eventually be referred to special education. It is not that the child has a true disability but that he or she cannot function in the classroom. We predict that in the future with this overly rigorous curriculum there will be more students referred to special education than should be.

The Common Core needs to go away. Curriculum expectations need to be developed by educators for educators. Teachers know what to teach, how to teach when to teach and how quickly to move on to the next skill and concept.

The teacher evaluation process is not going well either. Last Spring when Governor Malloy listened to the community state their concerns about education, I was allowed to speak to him and those in attendance in the West Rocks School Auditorium in Norwalk. What I chose to share was the teacher evaluation process that Westport has in place. The evaluation procedures are very effective in providing support for teachers in need and counseling others out of the profession. I mailed a copy to the Lieutenant Governor. Unfortunately, the new evaluation process is nothing like Westport's.

As an active teacher union representative, I recently attended a forum sponsored by the Connecticut education Association in Trumbull. In attendance were a large number of public school teachers from Fairfield County and area legislators. Teachers shared their concerns and frustrations with the common core and teacher evaluation procedures. Listening to the attendees reinforced my opinions and the urgency to correct these inappropriate practices now.

It is an overly challenging job to be a teacher these days with ridiculous expectations placed on us. These expectations are having a negative impact on our students. I am strongly requesting that the powers to be will listen to teachers and make the radical changes needed to our public schools.

Sincerely,

Heidi Scheckler