

The State of Connecticut must withdraw from the Common Core Standards and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortia. The Common Core Standards are not internationally benchmarked. They are not research based. They are not rigorous. In fact, while Commissioner McQuillan, of the Connecticut Department of Education was presenting the state's beliefs and principles at the 2010 Connecticut Assessment Forum, he acknowledged that "the prevailing paradigm for school improvement in Washington is not based on a solid foundation of research or hard evidence."

The Common Core Standards were not written by early childhood educators, high school English or math teachers, scientists, or engineers. There was no input from parents, or professionals who work with children with disabilities. The Common Core Standards were developed by three private organizations who never explained their rationale for choosing the writers, the members of the feedback group or the validation committee. In fact, all of the writers of the Common Core Standards were affiliated with businesses that make educational and testing materials, including ACT, Achieve, The College Board and America's Choice (Pearson). In essence, the Common Core Standards were drafted by people who will directly benefit and profit – testing and textbook companies.

As a parent of two elementary school aged children I want Connecticut's education dedicated to measures that will actually improve student learning. Unlike Jason Zimba (one of the lead writers of the Common Core Standards), who was quoted as saying that, "the concept of college readiness is minimal and focuses on non – selective colleges", I believe Connecticut's standards and curriculum should strive to prepare all students for competitive, four- year colleges and universities. This would include the availability of math classes such as Calculus, which according to Trevor Packer (Senior Vice President of The College Board) "is not part of the Common Core sequence." How can any school in the state of Connecticut deny students the opportunity to get the highest level of math education that he or she is able to achieve?

I am a firm believer in public education. I believe that students should learn from teachers who have intellectual

freedom to practice their profession according to their best judgements and individual talents. I believe that the Common Core will take away these freedoms. It has already stripped the joy for many teachers across our state as they find limited autonomy while aligning to the Common Core and preparing for the Smarter Balanced Assessments.

The Smarter Balance Test is a computerized adaptive test, which was made specifically to test the Common Core Standards. It has received harsh, public criticism from teachers across the state and parents who have researched sample questions from the SBAC website. Teachers in New Hampshire, who took the test in December as an early release, documented their feedback. Overall they felt it was “inappropriate for our students... the results from this test will not measure the academic achievement of our students; but will be a test of computer skills and students’ abilities to endure a cumbersome task.” For these reasons parents are exercising their rights to protect their children from the SBAC test by opting out. This right must be upheld.

The SBAC will cause harm. It is not an appropriate test to measure our teachers’ success or the academic achievements our children. How can it be? Just read a few of the many individual testimonies of the teachers from New Hampshire:

- “I feel sad for the students who have to take this test – not many will be successful”
- “I tried the grade six math – it was humbling. It was scary.”
- “This test will be exhausting for the kids.”
- “I did 30 questions in an hour and then had to take a break. My eyes hurt and my shoulders felt strained. When I returned 5 minutes later the work was gone.”
- “Frustration level builds as you take the test creating mental despair – students will shut down.”
- “Assessment is necessary but it should be designed to be developmentally appropriate for the students being tested.”

- “Students will fail this test and the test will destroy their confidence which is an important stage of their development. In addition, the results of this test will become a public relations nightmare for the school and the school districts as children will fail in large numbers.”

To quote one of Connecticut’s own, distinguished superintendents, “The CT reform agenda does not need to be fixed; it needs to be dismantled before it does any more harm” (James D. Lombardo, Ed.D., Superintendent of East Lyme Public Schools). The State Board of Education voted the Common Core in; and now they must vote it out. Repeal the adoption of the Common Core.

Respectfully submitted, on March 11, 2014

John and Nicole King
New Milford, Connecticut