

Gasps of Disbelief as Top Teacher Winner Resigns Over Common Core Testing

"I can't do it anymore."

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Stacie Starr, a veteran Elyria, Ohio, teacher who was chosen [as the winner of the “Live with Kelly and Michael” 2014 Top Teacher Search](#), announced her retirement on Monday, citing the increasing pressures on students and teachers under the mandated Common Core standards.

The [Chronicle-Telegram](#) reported:

Gasps of disbelief followed the announcement made during an education forum aimed at unraveling for parents the intricacies of the standardized testing system. Starr was at the podium, delivering a talk on how special education students are suffering under the new system based on Common Core standards and more rigorous assessments. She said as a veteran intervention specialist at Elyria High School, she could no longer watch silently from within the confines of a structured school day.

Instead, she is leaving education in the traditional sense.

“I am going to teach in a different way,” she proclaimed.

Starr wants to start an after-school mentoring program for at-risk students in hopes of saving them from the school-to-prison pipeline.

Starr spoke to a standing-room-only audience at the local public library and fought back tears as she announced her retirement at the end of the current school year. “I can’t do it anymore, not in this ‘drill ‘em and kill ‘em’ atmosphere,” she said. “I don’t think anyone understands that in this environment if your child cannot quickly grasp material, study like a robot and pass all of these tests, they will not survive.”

“I have faith in my students, but my students are reading at sometimes a fourth- and fifth-grade reading level,” said Starr, who teaches 9th grade students. “Each and every day, I have to look in my students’ eyes and tell them I can’t help them because the state has decided they have to prove what they know.”

She said it’s hard for teachers because “the rules keep changing.”

Another teacher at the meeting said he understands her decision. “I’m like you. I feel like I have to get out,” said Jackie Conrad, a third grade teacher.

Matt Jablonski, another veteran teacher from Elyria High School, said that he has been teaching since before No Child Left Behind became law.

“We will give the last [Ohio Graduation Test] this year. I don’t know if I’m going to cry when we do, because what we are moving to is unbelievable,” he said.

Last week Dawn Neely, another veteran teacher in the Elyria district, [implored the school board to take control](#) of the “testing culture” in their local schools.

“I don’t know what to do. I am morally against what we are doing, and I think history will judge us for what we do to fight for our kids,” she told the Elyria school board. “Look through the test books and you tell me if you think they are developmentally appropriate. No one is advocating for our district, and I am asking my district to be honest with the parents about what we are doing to students.”

Board president Kathryn Karpus responded to Neely’s speech by saying the district’s hands are tied. They are bound by Ohio laws that mandate the testing.

“All we can do is speak for students in numbers and hope Columbus listens and acts,” Karpus said.