

Dear members of the Education Committee,

My name is Teresa Selensky. I am a wife and a mother of three boys ages 11, 7 and 3. I am a former 1st grade teacher and Early Childhood teacher, leaving these jobs behind after having my third child. While working in Early Childhood for nearly 18 years, I used to be so very excited about the great strides we had made in understanding brain development and the way children learn, and how we had programs like Parents As Teachers to share that information with parents and watch THEM teach and care for their children. For several years during that time, I would hear from the teachers in the districts I served that children were coming to school eager and ready to learn, and that the parents of those children were very active in their child's schooling and in their learning needs. HOWEVER.....in a matter of a few years, that all changed. In order to get more money to serve more families, Parents As Teachers partnered with Early Head Start. What was the result? Tons and tons of paperwork for both me and the parents I served. We no longer got to focus on their child and how THEIR child learned. We now had to form "goals," follow strict medical schedules, have them fill out oodles and oodles of paperwork with detailed PRIVATE information about their family, and became a program more focused on documentation being sent into the Federal Government rather than a program open to ALL parents to help parents be the BEST first teachers of their children.

I became very depressed. At first I didn't know why. Then, after finding out I was pregnant with our little Samuel, a light when on. I was no longer happy in my work. I no longer felt that I was doing a service to parents and their children. In short, I was miserable. I made the decision to quit my job when he was born. Little did I know what actually lay ahead for me, my husband, and my children.

Enter Common Core.

My oldest son is highly intelligent. I learned his IQ score when he tested for the Gifted Program, but chose to let it rest in his IEP file. I didn't need a test to know that he had a high IQ. He has the ability to simply "see" math concepts in his head. How he does it is beyond anything I can comprehend. He also more or less taught himself to read by age 4. THAT I know was fostered by my love of reading and the many, many books his dad and I read to him. He entered the 3rd grade when I had Samuel. In October of that year (2011), he began coming home from school and saying, "I hate Math." He was also bringing home notes from his teacher saying he needed to read more Non-fiction. He was acting up in class more than usual. He was bringing home school work to be done at home that he had not been able to finish at school because of "daydreaming." I was at a loss until I looked at his Math book. I WAS STUNNED. I was looking at word problems that were too hard for even a 44 year old former 1st grade teacher to understand. I had to read them over and over again to try to understand what they actually wanted solved in the problem. Then, I shook my head in disbelief when my son showed me the steps he was told to use to solve a simple addition problem. Adding to this was concern for my 2nd grade CCD class. I had been teaching them about intercessory prayer, and 6 of the 7 children in my class asked St.. Padre Pio to "Please tell God I need help with my Math." What was happening in my local school?

Long story short.....all of my questioning and my research into what "Common Core Aligned" meant on his Math textbook led me to what has been at the forefront of my worries for the last nearly four years. When I worked in the Parents as Teachers program I always told parents they HAD to be advocates for their children. I gathered up all the facts I could research and took my concerns to our Superintendent/Principal. We met in her office for over two hours. In the end, I didn't think I had made any headway, but, at least she knew where I stood on what was happening in my children's school. Unlike some administrators, she at least let teachers who chose to teach the "old tried and true way" some leeway. One of those teachers was my son's 4th grade teacher. THANK GOD! His fourth

grade year was totally different than his 3rd grade year! But, now I had to contend with the inappropriate standards in my Kindergarten age son's classroom.

He brought worksheet after worksheet home every single night! I had to do a "practice test" with him each night before he was to take a "Math Test." By October of his Kindergarten year, he had been introduced to addition, subtraction, and greater than and less than. I taught 1st grade. I knew how confusing this jumping around was going to be to most of the children. I feel very fortunate that my son, although he learns VERY differently than his older brother, he is smart enough that at least he did not get too frustrated. Also, since I am a parent who is very aware of what is happening in our schools, I made sure to do at home what I KNOW works in helping him learn at the pace that he is capable of learning. In talking to other parents in my son's class, however, they were not as fortunate. For them, HOMEWORK in Kindergarten was a near-nightly ritual. I find this appalling.

What are we allowing to happen to our children? Why, after learning clear back in 1993-1994 how the brains of children grow the most and the fastest from birth to age 5 did we suddenly feel the need to trust people with ABSOLUTELY NO BACKGROUND IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT OR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION to design and force us to implement standards in our schools? Standards that are NOT developmentally appropriate. Why, after we KNOW FOR A FACT that the window of opportunity for learning to read is wide open anywhere from age 3 to age 9 do we suddenly accept standards and textbooks aligned to those standards that expect ALL children to be reading by the time they leave Kindergarten? Since when do we accept standards for children in K-3rd grade that were written by a committee that consisted of ZERO.....I repeat.....ZERO people with a background in Early Childhood Development or Education, or Kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade or 3rd grade teaching experience? That, to me, is both stunning and very, very sad.

Then, to add insult to injury, not only are the methods being used and the content being taught inappropriate for our youngest learners, they are now, in schools all over the country, being TESTED repeatedly on this content. And the tests are not paper and pencil tests. They are tests taken on a computer. Now, you know very well how frustrating it is when you loose the curser while typing; How it drives you nuts when you linger a bit too long over something and it automatically clicks on that image and the page changes; How hard it is to find your way back sometimes to a screen you lost or a screen you remember seeing a few clicks back; How awful it is to loose what you thought was right there on the screen in front of you. NOW! Pretend you are 5, or 6, or 7, or 8, or 9, and ALL of that is happening to you. Not only is it happening to you, but you are told that you can't ask for help and that you only have so much time in which you are to complete everything. Imagine that tests make you sick to your stomach anyway. And you are only a child.

I am pleading with you to put a stop to this! Our nation's classrooms are no longer an emotionally safe place for our children. Unless they have a teacher who speaks up and says, "I know this is not appropriate," and unless that teacher has an administrator who allows them to do so, our children are being treated like nothing but scores on a piece of paper. My children and all of the children of our great nation are so much more than that! Their teachers are so much more than what the standardized test scores show.

Titles such as "No Child Left Behind," "Common Core," and "College and Career Ready" may sound wonderful, but, like many things, reality is FAR different than the way things look on paper. Please put a halt to any further implementation of the Common Core Standards! If you thought NCLB forced teachers to teach to the test, what the heck do you think is happening with Common Core? I sat in an IEP meeting with my son's then-3rd-grade teacher and heard her panic about how quickly he had finished his Math Standardized Test and had shown no work on his

scratch paper. She looked right at the principal and said, "This is Common Core, right? They HAVE to do well on this!" I had to go home and FORCE my son to show some work and to "take longer" when he tested the next day. Much to her surprise, he ACED it. I am so grateful that she was humble enough to speak to me personally after she saw his score. But.... it was only AFTER she saw his score. Once again, a child's success being reduced to a test score. Once again, a teacher's success being reduced to a test score.

Please, please, please take my words to heart. Please put a stop to Common Core in Kansas. Our children deserve it. They are ALWAYS the only future the human race has.

Sincerely,

Teresa Selensky
2241 County Road 54
Grainfield, KS 67737
785-673-9775