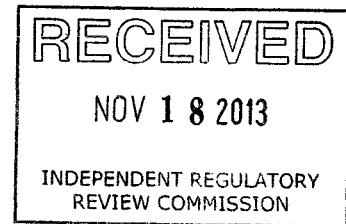


From: Dana Hanratty-Clay <danamhclay@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, November 17, 2013 3:49 PM
To: IRRC
Subject: Remarks on 6-326 and CCSS



Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Dana Hanratty-Clay and I am a Philadelphia teacher. I would like to pass along the following remarks to the IRRC.

I would like to begin with some important numbers. I began teaching during the 2007-2008 school year. From that time until now, I have personally bagged 17 tests to send back to PDE, due to the fact that they were covered in a child's vomit. I have made 34 phone calls to parents, explaining to them that they needed to pick their child up, since they had urinated or defecated on themselves while taking the PSSA. I have sent 1 child to the hospital for stitches in his head. He busted it open after banging it on the desk, repeatedly, during his test. Even though my proctor and I attempted to hold him still and calm him down, he was so overcome with emotion, there was no stopping him. That was another test I had to bag because of the blood. I average about 1 fist fight in my classroom a week, during the year, except for the PSSA testing window. During this time, I average about 5 fist fights a day in my classroom. This trend is not limited to me or my classroom. Discipline issues spike to new highs every year both school and district wide during testing time. Child psychologist after child psychologist has come forth, time and time again, stating that these are all signs of stress. Why must we continue this practice?

Why discuss testing when the conversation is about standards? CCSS were not finalized and validated until a deal was hammered out with Pearson to provide the assessments. One of the assertions of pro-Common Core educators and politicians is that it is not a curriculum. While this is true, the standards AND the tests were developed by the same committee. Therefore, what is tested is what must be taught. Testing, not standards, will be the anchor to which we tie our curriculum development. One of the frightening aspects surrounding CCSS is the fact that teachers are not allowed to see the format of the tests. This was never an issue with the PSSA or local benchmark assessments. Why all the secrecy? Why did Pearson put out a memo, stating that test security takes precedence over FERPA rights? Why has FERPA been rewritten to allow companies like Pearson to keep the assessments a secret? Additionally, how did Pearson become such a major player in all of this? Did we, the people, elect them? No!

If someday we are able to separate the testing from the standards, we will find many flaws with them as well. The math standards are so severely lacking, the lone mathematician on the validation committee refused to sign off on them. The ELA standards did not have a single K-12 English teacher, or a professor from the university system, on their validation committee. The standards for young children are severely, developmentally inappropriate. Many of the concepts are rooted in abstract thinking. Based on the work of Jean Piaget, we know that children, for the most part, are not developmentally ready to tackle this type of thinking until, roughly, age 11. Why are we demanding this of kids in kindergarten and 1st grade? It is a set up for failure and is not tied to any research whatsoever. Normally, this would be rendered the educational equivalent of medical malpractice. However, we are now attempting to make it policy. Why?

In closing, I would like to add that there is simply no need for CCSS. Mr. Duncan's own data shows that test scores are the highest they've ever been in our history. This also holds true for graduation rates. Dropout rates are at an all-time low. Since 2009, per NAEP data, states with "good" standards have raised their scores at the same rate as states with "bad" standards. Tell Mr. Duncan he can keep his reforms and that PA will not be a part of a system which places corporations and profits before the welfare of children.