

## **Cathy Fedrizzi, Teacher, Fayetteville-Manlius School District**

I am a teacher with over thirty years of elementary experience. I worked with elementary gifted students for 19 years, and have taught third grade for almost ten years.

The problem is not with the Common Core Standards. The problem is the way these standards have been tested.

I love the fact that there are high standards for all students, and that those standards are shared nationally. That insures that with our mobile population, students will be expected to learn the same things, whether they are in NY or DC.

The standards at third grade are rigorous. The interpretation by the test makers has determined how these standards are taught. As tested, most of the standards are above the level of third graders, even in the suburban district where I teach. Assessment has always been a part of learning. It is essential for a teacher to constantly monitor and assess his/her students as individuals so that instruction can be meaningful for the whole class, and to meet individual needs on both the upper and lower ends of the spectrum. The high stakes tests occur in April, but the results are sent to teachers and parents over the summer. I cannot use these tests to inform my instruction for these students, only for the next year's cohort.

We've swung the pendulum way too far in the direction of data collection and assessing, so that it has greatly impacted time to develop curriculum to meet the common core. We've been trying to "fix the plane while we're flying it."

Instead of incrementally adjusting the curriculum and testing as we move up the ladder, we've jumped to the top of the ladder without the proper rungs firmly in place.

We need to think about who takes these common tests, and how often and in what grades they are given. Students with IEP's must take these tests. I know a wonderful, hard-working 8-year-old boy, who came to third grade reading on a kindergarten level. He had an IEP because he had a learning disability. With the daily support of his resource teacher and a teaching assistant, his reading level in April was at the beginning of second grade. We've adjusted his work all year so he could gain the skills on his reading level. He felt good about himself, and proud of his accomplishments. During the NYS tests, he cried, as so many kids with IEPs (and without) have cried, because he was given a test he couldn't possibly pass, or even make sense of. Kids with IEP's have them for a reason, and those kids should not have to take a test designed for the general population.

I have great optimism that once the dust settles, the standards will be adjusted to include some aspects of creativity, which are absent now. common knowledge Teachers will teach to any test when their school district is strongly pushing for high scores and their own professional reputation relies so heavily on the scores of their

classes. Teachers are not willing to risk trying new, more engaging teaching strategies, such as project based learning or curriculum integration, because the experiment might not produce the kind of test scores needed for their APPR rating.

It's not the standards...it's the testing of the standards that is the problem!