

Rosalie Friend, Ph.D., Other, Save Our Schools

As an educational psychologist, I find the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) deeply flawed. Among the weaknesses, most serious are

- The standards for the primary grades are not developmentally appropriate.
- "Close reading" undercuts relating what is read to prior knowledge, reducing the ability to use what is learned in new situations.
- The use of standardized tests as a measure of the success of instruction undercuts engaging teaching and in depth thinking.

The Common Core State Standards were funded by businessmen and written by testing companies with little understanding of learning, instruction, child development or motivation. Most state constitutions demand that children be prepared to be active citizens. This means they must be prepared to think for themselves.

Children are not just small adults. Small children learn by doing, especially through structured play. A critically important statement opposing the K-3 standards, was developed in 2010 and signed by more than 500 early childhood professionals. The Joint Statement of Early Childhood Health and Education Professionals on the Common Core Standards Initiative was signed by educators, pediatricians, developmental psychologists, and researchers, including many of the most prominent members of those fields. I urge you to study this document.

Close reading is at odds with all that is known about how people learn. New ideas must be related to prior knowledge and to a person's experience and values if the new material is to be remembered and recalled. Ideas that are not part of the learner's network of concepts cannot be retrieved for use in new situations. In teaching reading we tell students to link ideas in three ways: text to text, text to world, and text to self, so the new concepts can be applied in the future.

Using multiple choice tests to judge the success of schools' implementation of the common core state standards means all children must reach the same conclusions, the opposite of being active citizens thinking for themselves and inquiring. Multiple choice questions with one right answer tend to be superficial. Critical thinking means that each thinker reaches his/her own conclusions. Creativity has been a unique strength of the United States and a source of economic growth. Straining for high test scores does not support creativity. Furthermore, standardized test scores are closely tied to socioeconomic status. Only 1%-14% can be attributed a child's teacher, so scores should not be used for accountability.

Children are motivated by hands on learning and meaningful open ended projects. When children have a chance to make decisions they become more invested in their studies. When material is linked to children's interests and experiences, it is learned more deeply and can be applied in new situations. Outstanding teachers are those who support and inspire their students, deepening their interest in learning and exploring.

The Common Core State Standards are undercutting learning and instruction. We

should drop procedures derived from business practices. School policies should be based on research in learning and instruction and should utilize the wisdom of experienced teachers.