

Kristin Smith, Teacher

I am a high school special education teacher in rural WNY. This is my 24th year in education. I could write a very big book on the wonderful experiences I've had in the classroom with my students. I could expound on their achievements, their challenges, and even some of their failures. Over the years we've created learning opportunities, taken field trips, explored our town, learned life skills related to the curricula, given and received presentations, performed community service, read/listened to novels of our choosing (even coordinated w/content areas), and wrote to our hearts' content.

In the last few years, the desire for learning has been lost. Students are inundated with test prep, useless assessments that I'll never see, or use, to help them learn. The joy of reading and writing has been stolen from them. The rules of pedagogy are ignored as are the practices of laying the foundation of sensical learning.

Special education, especially, has been a secondary thought and students are being cast aside with no thought; collateral damage. No great loss. If you don't think so. Ask them. What have you done to help them lately? Inappropriate standards, testing scheme gone haywire, obliterating IDEA beyond recognition, repealing testing modifications, removing diploma options and RCTs with no thought as to what will replace them appropriately.

So, Common Core? It's one big common mess. Like everything in education, this too shall pass. This needs to go sooner than later. It, and the tests that are supposedly aligned to it, must go; not rebooted, not revisited, not rebranded, or redefined, or reworked. Gone. Don't let pride or ego trip you up. It didn't work. Move on, please, for the children. They will never get back what they have lost. They deserve better.