

Making the Parent Connection | On Common Core

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By Melissa Jacobs-Israel on September 4, 2012 [2 Comments](#)

As the mom of a now-first-grader, my parenting world is colliding with my professional world. Last year, I eagerly brought my daughter to kindergarten geared not to be one of “those” meddling parents, micromanaging the teachers and hovering over projects. However, I soon realized it was going to be very difficult to keep my professional experiences and opinions to myself when it came to the Common Core. Then again, should I?

My daughter’s first project was a fact-finding assignment where she was instructed to “go on the Internet with a parent and find out information about the Solar System.” As I read the instructions, my school librarian blood began to simmer. It boiled when I read, “do a Google search.” I wondered what my daughter would possibly learn. Was there any expectation of her developing critical thinking skills? What questions was she answering? How do you find facts without answering a question? What context will five facts have in my five-year-old’s world? Googling Solar System returns 177,000,000 results; how can she possibly narrow the search without keywords teased from a concept map? Okay, maybe I was carried away, because this is was kindergarten, but I have standards: Common Core Learning Standards.

As I helped my daughter finish the assignment, I was left with nagging questions as a parent and as an educator. My distress was weighed down by my knowledge that so many of our nation’s educators now need training on Common Core. This project—while it did not reflect the great teaching and instruction my daughter’s teacher did provide—was representative of the homework teachers are used to assigning and parents are used to seeing.

It reinforced my belief that educators need strong support, training, and guidance, and considerable time to reframe and rethink their teaching methods, assignments, unit plans, and lesson plans. They need to become fluent in the new standards and proficient in scaffolding the skills necessary for their students’ success.

Bringing parents along

Throughout the last two years, the Common Core has been a hot topic among us educators, but what do parents really understand of it? Are parents aware that for the first time in history there is a national movement towards a commonality in educational methods? A lot of new catchphrases are circulating in education and publishing circles, but are they also making the rounds in parenting circles, PTA meetings, public libraries, community meetings, board meetings, parenting blogs, or parenting magazines? Are parents ready for a new type of homework?

Enter school librarians. We have the tools to help parents engage in the Common Core. We are adept at sharing information fluency skills and the need for information literacy, critical thinking skills, and project-based learning with parents. We build and maintain diverse collections of nonfiction materials and can help parents become familiar with the narrative texts that build rigor and engage kids. We also offer online databases and tools that provide access to vetted resources that trump any “Googling.”

We can help parents remain informed and positive about the educational shifts by providing informational brochures and links to Common Core resources, developing a school library parenting blog or newsletter, and making sure they are familiar with the library’s catalog. We can support teacher professional development and assist parents in understanding the need for change and the time required to make the shift.

Our common project

As a parent, between my two daughters I have another 15 years in the K–12 realm. I often wonder what it will be like. I understand it is beyond my personal capacity to influence every teacher my children encounter, but I can lend my professional insight. We all need to respect and support one another's role in the Common Core.

Together, administrators, teachers, librarians, and parents will help students reach their final destination of being career and college ready in our global society. Together, we need to challenge their growing minds, encourage their curiosity, move beyond teaching-to-the-test, and more deeply involve ourselves in their education.

Melissa Jacobs-Israel (Mjacobs7@schools.nyc.gov) is Coordinator, NYC School Library System, NYC Department of Education, Office of Library Services. To submit an On Common Core opinion piece, please contact Rebecca T. Miller at rmiller@mediasourceinc.com.

