

# Education Reform

by Parent Bloggers and Parents

compiled by Michelle L. Grewe, blogger for Crumpets and Bollocks

Another Title might be Ways To Spend More Money, but it needs it.

## Top Topics of Parent Bloggers regarding Education

- Safety from school shootings
- Common Core Curriculum
- Attendance and Education Neglect
- Driving your kid to school wearing flannel pj's (we won't go any further into that one)

## Topics covered below:

1. Standardized Testing
2. Bullying
3. Attendance
4. Security
5. High School Curriculum and College Credit
6. Classroom arrangement
7. Common Core

The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that parents possess the “fundamental right” to “direct the upbringing and education of their children.” The Court also declared that “the child is not the mere creature of the State: those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right coupled with the high duty to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations.” (*Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 U.S. 510, 534-35) The Supreme Court criticized a state legislature for trying to interfere “with the power of parents to control the education of their own.” (*Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390, 402.) In recognition of both the right and responsibility of parents to control their children’s education, the Court has stated, “It is cardinal with us that the custody, care and nurture of the child reside first in the parents, whose primary function and freedom include preparation for the obligations the State can neither supply nor hinder.” (*Prince v. Massachusetts*, 321 U.S. 158) *From*

<http://mrsmomblog.com/2014/03/29/why-my-children-will-not-take-state-assessments/>

## **When asked “What do you think are major problems in today’s education and how would you resolve them?” on my Facebook Pages:**

**Benjamin M Keysor** The problem is kids are not punished for doing something they should not of been doing. When I was in elementary school, when someone did something they weren't supposed to they could potentially get paddled, with a wooden paddle. There was also detention, in school suspension program- where you sat in one room all day doing your work and only leaving the room for a few restroom breaks and lunch. You could also be suspended from school a few days. Then there was Friday and Saturday school. Friday school is where you would sit in the cafeteria for 3 hours after school let out. Then Saturday school, you reported to school on Saturday morning at 9 am and sit in one room doing school work/home work for like 4 hours. I would often get Saturday school from being late so many times but I would usually skip it and then end up getting suspended for 3 days. Now days you don't even hear of a kid getting detention.

**Kim Myers** In my opinion teaching has moved too far away from the teaching of children and into the teaching what curriculum has been funded and lobbied the most. As well as "teaching to the test" instead of teaching to the development of successful students.

The students recognize that once the standardized testing "season" is done essentially there is nothing left to do. In short less focus on standardized testing and more focus on successful teaching and students.

**Barbara Dodson** I now have Grandchildren in school and as IN THEIR school, it would be more of NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND IF they went back to learning by unified recital of the ABC's n Timestables as well as the pledge of allegiance and morning prayer. THE POLITICIANS DO IT WHY SHOULDN'T we or our children.

**Randi Evette** All children do not learn the same way and the kids that aren't like everyone else get left out. Most teachers don't observe their students to see what makes them click, what gets their wheels turning. They are set in their ways and whoever doesn't catch on gets left by the wayside. This relates to special needs children as well as kids that just learn differently. I feel that we need to take a look at how other countries teach their kids, because they're smarter and somehow seemingly happier. I'll think of some ideas and email them to you. I just woke up and saw this.

**Misty Boley** Agreed Randi, I understand they have things that need to be taught on time, but, not every child is the same, learning struggles and set backs and teachers keep on moving forward

**Lina Mumm** Just take back everything George Bush has contributed to our wonderful education...no child left behind has ruined it. Teachers teach to the standardized tests. It doesn't help those who need the extra help to actually learn the material, and it bores the gifted students who actually need to be challenged. Kids shouldn't go to school to be brainwashed...they should be there to learn critical thinking skills.

**Marguerite Louis** More play to calm kids down

**Shelly Bastion Drys** Get rid of Common Core! This is killing today's kids love to learn and is even more difficult on kids who have learning disabilities.

**Shannon Styles:** In a nutshell, here are the main problems with Ed Reform:

\*Common Core was introduced and thrown on districts with little to no research. In order for states to receive the Race To The Top federal money (which turns out to be roughly \$12 per student) the states needed to have an approved APPR (teacher eval) plan.

\*The new APPR uses state test scores as a part of the eval score that put entirely too much focus on testing and prep rather than authentic learning.

\*The new state tests are now CCSS aligned, but students in grade 3 have only been exposed to the CCSS standards for one year...there is disparity there.

\*Modules: NYS created modules which are units for teachers to use that are scripted and aligned to CCSS. They were not created by teachers and are extremely developmentally inappropriate.

\*Money: districts are spending more each year on testing materials, yet state funding is decreasing every year. While schools are cutting staff and programs, the cost of Pearson testing materials continues to increase. Districts are spending more than they received through the RTTT federal money to implement CCSS and testing.

\*The links I provided (below... look for Shannon Styles) go into detail and explain each point here.

## Details of Issues

### 1. Standardized Testing

There is **too much testing going on**. The Problem? One, the schools are not adequately staffed to handle that load of testing. The burden usually falls on the Guidance Counselor, whose primary purpose is to counsel troubled students, one that gets the shaft when it's testing time. Two, teachers tend to teach based on test performance as opposed to their primary purpose, to teach children in a manner where children learn. Three, students are being tested on subjects BEFORE they get a chance to learn them. We need to pick one test (SAT 9 is recommended most) and use that in all 50 states, once a year, end of the year. That's it. All states using the same test would make it easier to compare results nationwide.

The money you save from excessive, anti-productive testing could be used toward better ideas listed below.

### 2. Bullying

West Virginia supposedly has one of the best anti-bullying policies out there; unfortunately, we parents have no idea what it is, or how to combat bullying when it happens. I have seen students bullied, not only by their peers, but also by the teachers, principals, and coaches. It's out of hand in my state, and a problem nobody wants to admit is happening. We are in denial that bullying on every level exists.

What we need to do is not only create an anti-bullying policy on a federal level, one that is a no-tolerance approach much like a sexual harassment policy in the workforce, but we need to incorporate a system for fixing the situation. **We need a place to report bullying**, up a chain of command, where some form of enforcement takes place to resolve the situation. We need a **protocol** because some people are too busy to really know what to do or how to handle a bully-victim situation, and a protocol that disciplines those who neglect their duties in this realm (because frankly, some teachers and principals just don't care about whiny kids complaining that their life is horrible because some kid is tormenting them). It would also have to have an investigation process to avoid abuse because bullies have no problem reporting victims as bullies in order to bully their victims.

### 3. Attendance

I understand attendance is important for successful learning; however, too much emphasis has been placed on it that it has become anti-productive.

*For example, my child broke her arm at school last September, during recess, on the playground, and no teacher could tell me how it happened. She missed school to go to the doctor, get an xray and a broken arm diagnosis, and again to get a cast from the orthopedic, and then again when she broke out into a rash around her cast, and then again when she submerged her cast in water. Those 4 days had a doctor's excuse, and I had a teacher lecture me about how those absences were interfering with her*

*learning, threatening education neglect my way. Then, my second kid got head lice. The school explained to me that she was not allowed back until she was nit free. She missed two days for it, one of which was with a doctor checking for nits and the day the nurse sent her home. Yes, I got rid of head lice in less than 5 days including a weekend. That's amazing considering some parents battle head lice for a year. So when the school threatened education neglect over her missing 2 days, including the day the nurse sent her home, I was a little livid to say the least. The year before it? My child was missing her chicken pox vaccination because the doctor ran out of it. The school explained to me she was just not welcomed there until she got it. She missed 5 days waiting for an appointment to get that specific vaccine, and not only did I receive a letter threatening education neglect, the nurse who kept her home those days demanded that education neglect charges be placed upon me for those specific days. Prior to that, when my daughter was in pre-school, the principal used to threaten education neglect charges against me for her absences, and the guy who actually does that explained there is no law requiring her attendance for pre-school in the first place.*

If you cannot tell, people are abusing the attendance policy. It needs to go away.

Here is the problem this insane policy poses. You force parents to visit a doctor when the child does not need medical attention in order to obtain an excuse note, many of whom cannot afford it. **You force parents into sending their kid to school contagious, creating more absences from other kids.** You take away the parent's right to do what is best for the child. Sick kids do not need to be in a socially awkward, challenging learning environment. They need to be home in bed.

A solution might be to take the emphasis off of attendance and place it upon learning. Make a lot of the material covered in school available at home. While a kid might miss school for the stomach flu, the kid can at least not miss what was taught. I'm not talking about homework; I'm talking about making the learning structure available to the home. If the classes were online to that depth, it would be a great resource for home-schooled. In this day and age of technology, the information should be accessible from anywhere outside of the classroom. Of course, the policy would have to give time after the absences to get caught up because sick kids are busy being sick to learn at home, and some kids do not have access to a computer (schools have computer labs for when they return to get caught up). If this was implemented; however, there would have to be more funding placed on education specifically for the jobs this would add to the system. It would not be a cheap solution.

#### **4. Security**

Obviously, with the onslaught of school shootings, school security could be heightened. This is a top topic among parent bloggers, and most of them seem to lean toward Gun Control while others like myself lean toward Mental Health Awareness (see below for links to blog posts). My solution toward the general security is to have a cop on duty at the schools during the school day; more than one for larger schools. This could also include a dog capable of sniffing out bombs and drugs. Bars have bouncers. Banks have security guards. Many restaurants open 24 hours has a cop keeping guard during the wee hours of the night. Where are our priorities here?

If anything, we could start training our teachers to be military cops. Honestly, most teachers I encounter could use a little military basic training on their resume. Most politicians could too. For the character alone. But in all seriousness, we could easily train our teachers some of the following: securing an area; violence readiness; things to look for regarding safety; and self-defense/Marine Corps Martial Arts (as it's the best for someone who is out muscled, though it all leads to death so maybe tweaked for civilian use and minimal force). The Air Force (with some Marines) can provide the training easier and better than any civilian contract.

In addition, this thing looks handy and should be in every classroom. The Sleeve.

<http://wnep.com/2014/06/11/an-iowa-teachers-invention-could-save-your-childs-life/>

## 5. High School Curriculum and College Credit

**The problem: The playing field is not even.** Lower-income children do not have the same opportunities as the wealthy. They are often working while attending college, building up loans they will never be able to pay back, and facing problems like homelessness during the week of finals while people like Mitt Romney gets his tuition paid for by his parents, in cash, without loans, and doesn't have to work or worry about financial troubles when studying for finals. In addition, when I went to high school, I took honors classes, Calculus, Physics... just so I can do it all over again in college, but this time on my dime. I was so bored in college it was unbelievable. They just repeated my high school, and in many classes, it was easier than high school.

**The solution: Make a basic education free for all.** In this day and age, a basic education that gets you an entry level job is a Bachelor's Degree. It would be easier than you think to merge college into our public high schools.

The general education requirements toward a bachelor's degree generally includes classes like English Comp 1, English Comp 2, a Literature course, a Psychology course, a math course, and two science courses. The high schools already teach these courses, and we could tweak the curriculum to cover the basic necessities for a college to honor those courses as college credit. Each high school class would have to be designed to cover two college courses in the matter of a year. Considering high school usually offers 7 classes in a day while college usually offers 4 at a time to be full time; it's possible to prepare students with more credits than necessary. Some universities are probably more lenient about giving credit, and I suggest checking with colleges like The University of Wyoming, West Virginia University (they offer a Regents degree based on work experience), and The University of Maryland University (they offer quite a few online programs).

Then as you get into the upper curriculum geared toward the degree, the schools can shift learning to an individualized online learning system, utilizing computer labs. This is where the government wheels and deals with a college, like University of Maryland University Online, to educate on those programs, or provide a waiver program to pay tuition to a list of colleges a student can choose from. In essence, a high school junior and senior would be taking actual college classes online.

Students then graduate high school with a high school diploma and Bachelor's Degree, and the only education they have to pay for is their Master's or Doctorate if they so choose to do such a thing. If people can gain college credit through portfolios based on work experience and CLEP tests, then I think a high school can offer something more than what is being offered if they just applied themselves.

## **6. Classroom Arrangement**

Studies are showing that kids learn better in a flexible learning environment. One where the classroom is designed more for group activities, problem solving adventures, and collaboration between students and teachers (as opposed to the Victorian classroom settings we use for the most part). I really think this is important for grade school. Middle school has too much bullying and drama for group activity, in my opinion, and should be more of an individualized, learn-at-your-own-pace environment like a lot of private schools who use Lifepacs or Paces. Basically, I think the goal in elementary education should be to get the children to work together to learn; however, middle school's goal is to keep the children away from each other as much as possible. If you are laughing, it's only because you know I'm right. I assure you, get middle school kids in a group, and there is less learning and more bullying.

## **7. Common Core**

No parent seems to really be a fan of common core. I think a lot of that is that the parent has yet to be educated fully on what common core means (as I am one of them), but I also think (based on mom bloggers I have read) the schools hastily ran to it without much testing and experimentation on the subject (which is really an ethics issue). Not every kid learns the same as others. A teacher needs the freedom to teach in the manner his/her specific students learn.

“Creating modules that are a scripted nightmare for both the teacher and student is not the answer. You are ruining children. You are killing their spirit. You are making them believe they are dumb because they can't multiply and divide on the exact day that the module says they should be multiplying and dividing. You are creating a generation of disengaged children who now feel insufficient.” Shannon Styles

## **Blog Posts About Mass Shootings and Fear of Children's Safety**

Crumpets and Bollocks

<http://www.crumpetsandbollocks.com/2014/06/im-sick-of-talking-about-guns-without.html>

The Bloggess

<http://thebloggess.com/2014/04/please-talk-to-your-children-mild-trigger-warning/>

High Gloss and Sauce

<http://www.chicagonow.com/high-gloss-and-sauce/2014/06/dear-congress-my-kids-should-feel-safe-in-school/>

Mary Tyler Mom

She has multiple posts on gun violence demanding gun control

<http://www.chicagonow.com/mary-tyler-mom/category/gun-violence-2/>

Ups and Downs of a Yoga Mom

<http://www.chicagonow.com/ups-and-downs-of-a-yoga-mom/2014/06/dear-congress-please-fix-this-gun-problem/>

Life with Penis People

<http://lifewithpenispeople.wordpress.com/2014/06/13/1190/>

Blogger **Shannon Styles** is a Mother and Educator

**On common core**

<http://mrsmomblog.com/2013/10/02/how-common-core-is-slowly-changing-my-child/>

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/shannon-styles/white-suburban-moms-unite-a-letter-to-arne-duncan\\_b\\_4305599.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/shannon-styles/white-suburban-moms-unite-a-letter-to-arne-duncan_b_4305599.html)

**On State Assessments**

<http://mrsmomblog.com/2014/03/29/why-my-children-will-not-take-state-assessments/>

**On Teacher Evaluations**

<http://mrsmomblog.com/2013/10/27/teacher-evaluations-and-your-child/>