

**Testimony from Michelle Turner, teacher at Blackstone Valley Prep Charter School
In opposition to House Bill 7095
February 26, 2014**

Good evening members of the Health, Education and Welfare Committee. My name is Michelle Turner and I am the Art Director and an art teacher at Blackstone Valley Prep Charter School. I speak to you today from a couple of unique perspectives **in support of the Common Core State Standards** (and in *opposition* to H7095).

As an art educator, I see every student in the school and am privy to the learning that takes places in all grades. For more than 17 years it has been my personal, professional mission to make as many connections between learning in the classroom and learning through the fine arts. I firmly believe that each child has their own learning style and providing them an opportunity to demonstrate that learning in a variety of ways is a no-brainer approach to a thoughtful, comprehensive education. Please note, there are currently NO Common Core State Standards for Art, not yet, at least. I DO, however, by choice, use Common Core State Standards in my art classroom. Why do I do this? I have found that providing multiple ways to learn content actually reinforces mastery. Concepts they learn in their classroom can be approached in different ways in the art room, therefore tapping into different learning styles. How do I do this? **By interpreting the Common Core State Standards in creative ways.** I review the Common Core State Standards for each grade level. I take note of the opportunities where the standards allow for strong connections between the core disciplines and the arts. I then create art lessons that tackle both my art objectives and math and ELA objectives as well. It's what I bring to the table as an art teacher, selfishly dedicated to the success of my students. I use the Common Core State Standards to suit these purposes, I DON'T feel used *by* them. For example:

4th Grade	Math.Content.4.G.A.3 Recognize a line of symmetry for a two-dimensional figure as a line across the figure such that the figure can be folded along the line into matching parts. Identify line-symmetric figures and draw lines of symmetry.	General Classroom: Scholars determine lines of symmetry in basic geometric shapes and figures.	In Art: Scholars create Amate paper cut-outs (Mexican craft) in which an imaginary creature is created along a line of symmetry.	NVAS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6
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By *no* means am I saying that my main goal is to explicitly teach only the Common Core standards in my art classroom. I remain steadfast to my Visual Arts National Standards but I *will* stand by the fact that I know my students are getting a better grasp of the curriculum when learning is linked. And that's my point! Even as the art teacher, I want them to learn just as much as any other teacher in the building. The Common Core State Standards are not meant to

be taken at face value – they are to be interpreted. It is up to the dedicated, creative teacher in all of us to create the learning opportunities that best serve our students. The Common Core State Standards are guidelines that keep us all on track – no matter the city, town or state. Don't we share the same goal? Why not the same track?

Wouldn't it be powerful if teachers could share great ideas across the country about the same content? Wouldn't it be cool to see how a certain standard can be interpreted in so many different ways, to reach every child? But, wait, we CAN have these opportunities across the state, across the country – if we shared the same goals and benchmarks – if we shared the same COMMON STANDARDS. I'd love to share my ideas on integrating Art and Math and ELA with teachers near and far and would certainly appreciate gaining other's insights as well, to enhance my practice. There's no end to the creative ways we can make learning fun, unique and accessible for all students. But the strength and power in that comes from starting on common ground.

I have the distinct pleasure of teaching my own children from time to time, as they also attend the school where I teach, and I would be remiss not to mention, that, as a parent, I can easily see the value of utilizing Common Core. In a country where the levels of rigor, and interpretations of said rigor, differ vastly, I take heart knowing that my children will be held to the same standards and benchmarks as every other child in America. If I were to move my children to another state, it would be one less worry to wonder what they would, or should, be learning. If I can expect the same benchmarks no matter where I live, then I can be assured that my children are receiving as good of an education as anyone else's.

But truthfully, the heart of the matter, to me, is how well the Common Core standards integrate so many different aspects of learning. Each of my three children has different learning styles. One simple Common Core standard, in the hands of a thoughtful, creative and capable teacher can become such a powerful vehicle of learning, in *more* than just one way. With Common Core standards inspiring the words and actions of my children's teachers, they can be exposed to so many varieties of learning – acquiring skills and problem solving strategies that will aid them in tackling the diversity of life situations. Sure, the power is in the interpretation of these Common Core standards, how they are applied and made accessible to children. Sure, it's in the hands of teachers, like the ones my children are lucky enough to work with each day; teachers who are willing to buckle down and get creative. It's what I bring to the table every day of my teaching for other's kids. But I'll ask you with certainty – what parent would NOT want that for their children?

Thank you.

Michelle Turner, Art Director/Art Teacher, BVP