

**Sent:** Fri 5/28/2010 5:00 PM

**To:** Steven Keller; Annette Alpern; Arlene Staich; Todd Loewenstein; Jane Diehl; Andrew Gamet; sclarc@gmail.com

Good afternoon,

This past Tuesday I attempted to speak at the Board Of Education Meeting but was unable to do so. I arrived at 6:20 hoping to be heard and then be able to leave by 7:45 or 8:00. Because the closed session went for an extended time and I had to get my three young children (who were with me) home for dinner and homework and baths, I left at 8:00 (just as doors opened for the open meeting to begin). Unfortunately it was too late for me and my children to stay, so I will try to communicate to you what I wanted to say in person at the meeting.

I came to the Board Meeting wanting to share my thoughts on the District's decision to forego purchasing an extremely critical piece to our Language Arts Program: the Kindergarten Practice Workbook. It was presented to us teachers that the decision to NOT purchase these materials was based on the fact that these are *not* core curriculum, that they are *extra* practice. If this is true, then what exactly is the core curriculum at the Kindergarten level? Is it the 20 big books, the alphafriends cards and the teacher's edition? How are five year olds with little more than the knowledge of how to write their name supposed to learn to read books and write stories of two and three sentences with just those materials? I disagree that the Kindergarten Level Practice Book is extra, rather *it is* the core curriculum in conjunction with the alphafriends cards and big books and phonics readers. A new writer/reader needs practice forming the letters, needs practice matching sounds, needs practice showing comprehension without having to write sentences, needs practice with high frequency words. Our practice books afford them that practice. Further, the practice makes sense because it is a comprehensive set of materials: the alphafriend appears on the sounds practice pages, the comprehension practice pages teach reading strategies directly related to the big books, etc.

I went to the Houghton Mifflin website and discovered that each practice book for Kindergarten is less than \$14. Even if every school site had 100 Kindergartners (which is a high estimate), the total for these essential materials would only be about \$12,000 for all elementary schools in our district. (Of course, we may have even better pricing given that we have previously purchased the materials as a District.) Please reconsider purchasing these practice books for the Kindergarten teachers to utilize for the upcoming school year. I am very aware of budget cuts, but our photocopying costs will be astronomical without these materials. New writers need models to trace and copy; they are not able to simply produce. Like every other Kindergarten teacher, I can do Zoophonics or Jolly Phonics or whatever Frank Schaeffer worksheets seem most applicable, but none of them are directly aligned to the Houghton Mifflin Program. Furthermore, there will be absolutely no consistency from classroom to classroom, let alone school to school. If these materials are not going to be purchased, will other materials be purchased instead? I am wondering how we are expected to teach the State Standards and more without appropriate state approved/adopted materials

I know you are all extremely busy and do not have the luxury of frequent visits to the classrooms to see how materials are utilized. I wanted to be sure you knew that at the Kindergarten level these practice books are an essential piece of the core curriculum. Perhaps knowing this will help you make the best decision concerning the education of our youngest students.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,

*Mrs. Sue Carlton Cantor*  
Kindergarten Teacher  
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