

John P. Carroll

October 30, 2012

I am here today on behalf of students who are under the 504 Spec Ed program; more specifically - my daughter who is Dyslexic.

At the end of May this year I received a letter from my daughter's principal advising us she will have to retake all the STARR tests. The letter also stated that if she does not score a cumulative total of 10,500 on these tests, she will not graduate on the Recommended Plan. As you can imagine, I was stunned by this comment and my daughter was devastated. Because of my daughter's learning disability, I knew that she would have an extremely difficult time passing these tests, but not being able to graduate because of her dyslexia was a huge set back. Since she is dyslexic she has a very difficult time with these tests, in fact she had great difficulty passing the TAKS test, but was always promoted to the next grade because of her success in the classroom – this past year she made A's and B's in all her classes. This last six weeks she almost made honor roll in all of her classes - she just missed by making a 79 in one of her courses.

Because my daughter did not pass the STARR tests earlier this year, she retook the tests this past July. We hired tutors to help her prepare, but unfortunately she did not pass. It has been recommended that she now enroll in course work to help her prepare for these tests - these courses will be in place of her electives. My daughter is having a very difficult time giving up her Dance Class, Latin, and her Nutrition and Wellness class to take courses for the STARR test. This STARR test is not going to help her academically nor will the courses. She will be missing far much more by being moved from these electives. For many students, it is the joy they get from electives such as dance, band, sports, speech, etc. that keeps them interested in and committed to school. If test prep takes the place of electives then these students drop out.

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This current STARR program is penalizing people with learning disabilities. This test will do nothing to enhance my daughter's academic success, in fact; it has done more harm and is causing a lot of stress and destroying her self-esteem. Also, because of this program I foresee her entire High School career working to pass these tests, while her true academic development will suffer. Additionally, the graduation plan under STARR program is destroying her dreams of attending the college of her choice if she does not pass. This EOY course exam is destroying her and her future as well as others in her situation.