

Norma Villarreal

Warren and Woodrow's Education

I am here to voice my concern about the high stakes test that is administered in our public schools in the state of Texas. I am here to speak from the heart of a grandmother and the heart of a longtime educator. As the grandmother of a 3 year old little boy and a 9 month baby boy, I have begun a conversation with my son and daughter-in-law about Warren's and Woodrow's future education. We have been dialoguing about the advantages and disadvantages of a public school education in comparison to a private school education.

Throughout my years as a public school teacher, I have seen a dramatic change in the quality of curriculum and instruction that our students are getting. Gone are the wonderful thematic units that fostered critical thinking, big ideas, in depth research, problem solving, and student centered instruction, that we were doing a decade ago. They have been replaced by binders full of worksheets, strategies, benchmarks and TAKS releases that are all geared towards students passing the TAKS test. What I am seeing in the classrooms is rigid, sequential transmission of knowledge by the teachers to the students.

I want Warren and Woodrow to take ownership over their own learning and be self-motivated to achieve. I want them to be engaged and involved in their learning process. I want them to be active participants in an enriched curriculum that makes connections to the real world and prepares them to be productive citizens of our global society.

I FEAR FOR THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN OUR SOCIETY. I WAS RAISED IN THEM, I LOVED THEM FOR YEARS, BUT NOW I FEAR THAT OUR CURRENT POLICIES, ESPECIALLY THE SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY, HAS DONE ACTIVE DAMAGE TO HOW THE PUBLIC VIEWS THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. ACTUALLY, NOT JUST THE PUBLIC, BUT ALSO THOSE OF US IN THE PROFESSION WHOSE SPIRITS ARE SLOWLY BEING KILLED BY THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS.