Date: _____

Dear Teacher,

Please excuse my child _____ from all crunches, crunch-like motions and sit ups during class. I have been on a personal quest lately to heal and strengthen my own core, and during that journey, I've come across a large amount of information, research articles, scientific abstracts and blogs that correlate situps and crunches to many health issues including diastasis, incontinence, hernia, prolapse, prostate issues, digestive troubles, and more! I respect that your original training may have educated you to believe that these modes of core training are a benefit to the spine, so - in addition to asking that you provide my child and perhaps the rest of your class with safer alternatives such as planks or side bridges - I'd like to supply you with some solid sources and quotes from researchers and experts who specialize in the core.

The number of professionals taking a stand against crunches and situps in their fields of physical therapy, biomechanics, kinesiology, general fitness, and personal training are too many to list. A lot of what I learned came from Fit2B Studio, and they have a great page for teachers at http://fit2b.us/teachers and one particular physical therapist who works daily in the field of abdominal rehab, Kelly Dean of The Tummy Team in Washington state, believes that excessive crunches and situps performed by children, such as those in the Presidential Physical Fitness Test, aren't the best choice. Her site is www.thetummyteam.com

Another expert wrote, "Crunches weaken ..not strengthen the abdominal muscles and are the worst exercise children can do for both their abdominal muscles and their backs. Yet this is what they are taught in our schools as part of the "fitness program." Crunches separate the abdominal muscles and separated muscles {diastasis recti} are weak muscles. Separated muscles cannot correctly do their job of supporting the back and organs. To achieve a strong core, muscles must be close together," says Julie Tupler, RN, Producer of the Diastasis Rehab Belly Button Boogie® DVD. Tupler is world-famous for her diastasis and hernia research. Julie is based in New York and is considered the pioneer of diastasis rehab.

Kim Vopni of pelvicfloorwellness.com in Canada says, "Crunches have long been the 'go-to' exercise for flat tummies, easing back pain and building core strength. Current best practices, however, suggest that this exercise may be doing more harm than good. As a society we spend a lot more time sitting than we used to and it starts at an early age with video games and tv watching. Children are growing up into adults with c-shaped spines and by performing crunches we are exacerbating this inefficient and downright unhealthy posture. Crunches place excessive loads on the spine, they encourage rounded shoulders and forward head posture, they shorten the muscles of the trunk and they place pressure on the connective tissue holding the contents of the core in place. Introducing this 'exercise' at an early age sets our children up for back pain, pelvic floor weakness and a poorly functioning core. Getting our kids out of their chairs, walking, running, climbing, and swinging will set them up for health. (The rest of us should join in too!)"

Another professional writes, "We must consider how kids develop best….they were designed to strengthen through play! Isn't a handstand in good alignment essentially an inverted plank? A cartwheel is just a plank in motion. And really let's be honest, both are a lot more fun," writes Julie Wiebe, sports medicine physical therapist in California. "Maintaining balance on a beam while performing a quick jump with good form demands a lot from that central stability system and trains it in a functional and fun way….no added strengthening necessary. Balance games in good alignment at the end of the session will do more to strengthen their centers in a meaningful way than 100's of crunches or planks." Read Weibe's full "Dear Coach" article at http://www.juliewiebept.com/fitness/dear-coach/

Thank you for reading this letter. You are an amazing teacher, and my child and I value your work. We know you love what you do, and I'm thankful to you for serving my family and this community.

Sincerely,