

Members of the House Education Committee,

Three years ago I retired as part what has been termed a [“slow-motion walkout”](#) of teachers leaving the education profession. I was only 58 and certainly had a desire to continue teaching because I loved my job (at least until I no longer did). The major reason I left early was the excessive amount of testing that I was expected to administer to students and the toxic way that testing had taken over the education environment.

As a trained Language Development Specialist, I believe in assessment. I was taught how to read and understand different kinds of scores and what kind of assessments should be used for which purposes and for which students. I understand the need for a big picture look at how our schools and different groups of students are doing. But what we are doing now is wrong. We are testing every student, every year, with an incredibly long and arduous state assessment system that leaves no room for professional judgement as to whether or not that assessment is appropriate for an individual student at that particular time and provides little to no useable data to the staff that work with students.

State testing in my sixth grade classroom usually took about two weeks of instructional time from each of the tested subjects (English Language Arts and Math) depending on how many students took more than the allotted week of instructional time per tested subject area to finish a test. When many students are being pulled from class to finish testing, no new material can be taught without those students falling behind. And this only speaks of the time lost to the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

For English learners even more instructional time is lost. They must take the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) which most often administered by support staff who give specialized instruction to English learners when it's not “testing season” (which usually lasts from February through May). For example, while they are testing grade 1, they cannot provide instruction to grade 5. Support staff for students in Special Education are also often utilized to administer tests, especially when a student's IEP accommodations require them to test alone or in a small group. Again, when those staff must administer a test, those specialized instructional classes are cancelled for other students.

This testing regime began in 2001 with No Child Left Behind, which is now universally recognized as a failed policy. However, it is policy we have continued to reinforce and build on. That system has not delivered on its promises. It is antiquated, harmful, and completely out of control. Following this pandemic, do we really want a rigid system where all kids must be tested every year, losing weeks of instructional time? Do we really want to use this much valuable staff time for testing instead of teaching?

We don't need to test every child every year to get a big picture. [NAEP \(the National Assessment of Educational Progress\)](#) which is historically the big picture gold standard, uses a sampling of students to measure national progress. We could do the same statewide.

Or even better, we could develop an assessment system that is embedded as a project (performance task) in curriculum. The [New York Performance Standards Consortium](#) uses such assessments and is widely recognized for educational excellence. This sort of assessment does not take away learning time and also provides a more authentic picture of what students can do than sitting behind a computer, unable to access any informational resources, ask any clarifying questions, or collaborate with others, for hours on end. That is not a real picture of anything other than taking a standardized test.

It is past time for a change. Please pass this bill so that we can reclaim lost learning time for our students.

I know how valuable all of our time is. Thank you for yours.

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