

Parents and taxpayers in New York State may not be fully aware of the burden that has been placed on them, as well as on their children, by new laws mandating increased testing of students as a means of evaluating teachers and administrators. State law now requires that twenty percent of a teacher's yearly evaluation must be based on student performance on state standardized tests, and that an additional twenty percent must be based on so-called "local assessments." Many educators strongly believe that this testing is counter productive, expensive, and harmful to our children. Excessive testing causes them to lose valuable instructional time due to test preparation and administration; it puts additional unnecessary pressure on our students; and it costs districts money that they cannot afford to spend.

The State Education Department has made it nearly impossible for these "local assessments" to be created locally, by the educators who actually work with the students. Instead, districts are being put in a position, against their wishes, where they must purchase exams from corporate publishers, at a cost of as much as nearly \$20 per student. This year, Bellmore-Merrick is doing this to follow NYSED regulations in the middle schools in English and Math. Next year, the state plans to expand the testing to all subject areas in middle school and high school, at additional cost. This is yet another unfunded mandate that districts across the state are being forced to deal with. We are being compelled to spend large sums of money on testing, at a time when state aid is being cut, expenses are increasing, and a tax cap is being imposed on us.

Moreover, our students are already over tested. Do they really need additional tests that are designed primarily not to educate them, but to evaluate their educators? Teachers and administrators obviously must be accountable as professionals for the jobs that they do. No one would argue that point. But to give students additional high stakes tests, at great cost to school districts, in order to supposedly accomplish that goal, is both financially and educationally damaging. Children are being used as political pawns in the movement for "education reform"; and it is simply wrong.

Taxpayers and parents who agree that this is wrong need to make their voices heard on the state level, demanding that unfunded mandates and unnecessary testing be ended. Our state legislators and the Governor need to hear from us.

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