

My name is Marianne Adrian. First I would like to thank you for this opportunity to share my experiences with you in regards to the new curriculum and testing. I am the proud parent of a seventh and fourth grader and one now in pre-school.

My older children have had great experiences in the district that we live. I moved back to my town because our schools have a good reputation. In fact, our two high schools have just been ranked 935 and 939 nationally. As I am an alumni from this district, that fact makes me proud. We have an administration in place that cultivates an atmosphere of openness and creativity. The teachers that have taught my children so far have all been phenomenal. Both of my boys have loved school and have grown each year as students and people. Last year I started seeing a change in both of them, particularly in my third grader, early on in the year. My son would often come home with stomach aches, headaches and exhibiting behavior that was unlike him. His school day consisted of test prep for most of the day. Once home he would have 2 – 3 hours of homework. There was even a two week stretch that my son argued with me and stated he did not like school anymore. When the state tests came around, his behavior became increasingly worse. He came home after day 2 of the ELA crying and asked me to not make him take the last day of the test. I don't blame him for feeling this way. He was 9 and being forced to sit for 90 minutes a day, 3 days in row for English and then had to do it again for math the next week. He begged me to not make him take the math state test. Right after the state tests were done, he became a different child again, the fun and happy child he usually is. Today, he is anxious as we wait for the test scores because he fears that he failed them and therefore let me and his teacher down. He asked me: If I do not pass the state tests, will I have to go back and redo third grade? He is a child and doesn't understand what is going on.

My sixth grader experienced some of these same issues. He was also getting 2 – 3 hours of homework a night in math and ELA. One day I was helping him with math and asked him to get his text book so we can look at it. He informed me that they didn't have one. My son, who was an A student through fifth grade, fell behind. We worked at it together, he studied, but he struggled. I found this strange as math has always been his stronger subject. As the school year progressed, he started to give me a hard time about doing homework and would tell me that they have so much reading and writing in school already. By the time the tests came around, he was so burnt out from prepping for the tests all year long. He told me that during the ELA's and math tests many students were leaving the room crying. A friend of his who is a straight A student got sick during one of the tests and almost had to leave. This brings me to the conclusion that the effectiveness of these lengthy tests should take into consideration the emotional and physical stress, something the data cannot possibly tell you.

As this was happening, I started doing research. I joined social media groups such as the Long Island Opt out group. What I found was that there were many other parents like me who were also having the same issues. I have since learned the state tests are being used as one of several ways to evaluate the teachers as well as the children. I noticed personally that there was not as much emphasis on other subject areas like science and history; therefore, my children were no longer getting the education that encompasses the whole child. They were losing out on a well- rounded education. I also learned that I am, by far, not the only one who feels this way. By tying these tests to the teacher's evaluations, and standardizing them, education began to be "one size fits all". It was all about

standardized tests and teaching to them, rather than how each child learns and at what pace they learn at. The teachers and schools are not allowed to view the actual tests. Yet, teacher performance and evaluations are linked to them. Viewing the tests would be a great tool for them to be more effective in their classrooms, and in turn, the children, my children, would benefit. It would also allow teacher's to learn from each other and pull from one another's strength's.

I would be amiss if I didn't point out that I am not against the new curriculum as a framework for teachers to use or testing students to measure what they have learned. I am not opposed to having a sound teacher evaluation in place. But I am opposed to the methods which are in place today to evaluate the teachers. I am opposed to not only having the state tests, that are mandatory, but additionally the SLO's and MAP tests as well. This adds more testing hours and takes away from teaching hours. I am opposed to this new "teach to the test" environment that has taken over the classrooms. I am opposed to the inability of the teachers to have the freedom to teach a flexible curriculum that fits the different levels of the students.

After last year, I feel strongly that this implementation should have at least been executed in stages and that teacher evaluations should not be attached. The mental harm that is being done to children, especially on the elementary level, is going to be in some cases, irreparable. Once you take away the love of learning, it is difficult to get it back. It is easy to take away confidence, but so hard to build it back up.

Another point that concerns me is student privacy. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act or FERPA was created in 1974. It was put in place to protect student data at a time when we were not in the digital age we are in at this moment. Times have changed, and so have the rules of FERPA. In 2009 and again 2011, verbiage was added. This change now enables NYS to share student's data with third party vendors contracted with the state. But there are no guarantees that can or will be made to make sure this information is safe. We live in an age where hackers have broken through company's firewalls and retrieved sensitive data. As recently as this past summer, a group of hackers obtained 160 million credit card numbers – breaches occurred and private information was stolen. The new FERPA rule changes allow more companies and government agencies to have access to the private and sensitive information of minors, including my 3 children, information that was previously protected. Knowing that the state is uploading my children's data onto a Cloud system is extremely concerning to me as a parent, understanding what could happen if the systems are in fact breached. While I am certain that the state is taking measures to protect this data, I ask you...is it enough? I know that there are several bills out there that are addressing this. One of them is bill S5355-2013 that encompasses K12 student privacy and prohibits the use of systems like cloud to process student data for commercial uses. This to me seems like a great start in protecting this data and my children. Ultimately, I would like to see an option for parents to decline their child's data from being shared with third party vendors.

In conclusion, I feel strongly that the implementation of the curriculum is something that needs improvement to ensure the success of the children, teachers and schools. But more than that, the standard of tying the teachers APPR's to the test should be eliminated or at least put in place a moratorium to allow time to reflect and figure out a better and more effective way. Pressures have

increased in the classroom and for some, like my children, outside of the classroom as well. In addition, the mental health of the students also needs to be considered - not just the test scores and data. As the health and well – being of my children is my primary concern, protecting their privacy is imperative. For that reason, I look forward to following the progress of Bill S5355-2013. I am sure that we can all agree that the children of New York State deserve the best and well – rounded education possible. Again, thank you for this opportunity to consider my thoughts and concerns.