



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Cecilia Tkaczyk

## Legislators Hold Forum on Impact of Testing and Mandates on Public Schools

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Teachers, parents, school superintendents and administrators from rural, urban and suburban school districts provided testimony to state legislators today on the impact increased testing and new state and federal mandates are having on our public schools.

The forum was organized by **Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy and State Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk**, both of whom are former school board presidents. They were joined by Democratic and

Republican colleagues from the Senate and Assembly.

Testimony was presented on the effects testing can have on children's emotional health, the loss of hours of instructional time, and the financial strain caused by testing and other mandates at a time when school districts' budgets are stretched to the limit.

The forum, which was titled “**Education at a Crossroads: A Forum on the Impacts of Testing and Mandates,**” included testimony from a number of experts, including:

- Marie Wiles, Ph.D, superintendent of Guilderland Central School District;
- Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard, Ph.D, superintendent of City School District of Albany;
- Ray Colucciello, Ph.D, Superintendent of Fonda-Fultonville Central School District;
- Gregory Diefenbach, Assistant Superintendent for Business, Voorheesville Central School District
- Mark Eagan, President and CEO, Albany Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Mark Pascale, Board President, Cohoes City School District
- Natélegé Turner, RtI Director, Troy City School District
- Katie Ferguson, 2nd Grade Teacher, Schenectady City School District, 2012 NYS Teacher of the Year
- Sara Niccolli, Parent, Fort Plain Central School District
- Colin Winters, 8th grader from O'Rourke Middle School, Burnt Hills- Ballston Lake Central School District.

**Kathleen Ferguson**, who was selected **2012 New York State Teacher of the Year** for her work with 2nd graders in Schenectady schools, presented testimony at the forum and said, “As a

New York State teacher, I completely agree in accountability. I completely agree that we should set real and measureable goals and learning objectives, and then regularly assess our students' progress to determine needs and future teaching." But she added that the current system of testing in New York, "...is excessive, and it changes the very nature of what schools are supposed to be- places of learning, growth, inspiration, and perseverance, as well as communities that embrace the many stages and styles of success

**Assemblymember Patricia A. Fahy** (D-Albany) said, "We have received countless letters and emails from parents, teachers, administrators, and students with concerns about the over testing of students and an excess reliance on the use of tests in the classroom. It is not the shift to the use of Common Core standards in the classroom, it is the lack of preparation and the rush to test on these changes before full implementation. Testing is just one way of seeking accountability in education - not the only way."

**State Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk** (D-Duanesburg) said, "There are 24 school districts in my five county Senate District, ranging from relatively wealthy low-need suburban districts to poor, high-needs rural and urban districts. I have met with or talked to school board members and superintendents from each of those districts and they have all expressed concern over the impact increased testing is having. While assessment is a critical part of effective teaching, the approach we're taking may very well be undermining teachers' ability to teach and students' ability to learn."