



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Marc Panepinto

## Senator Panepinto (D-Buffalo) is Joined by Assemblyman Ray Walter (R-Amherst), Assemblyman Michael Kearns (D-Buffalo), and Public Education Community to Rebuke Ill-vetted High Stakes Testing on Eve of State Exams

MARC PANEPINTO April 14, 2015

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*Panepinto: "There is no correlation between the over-testing of our children and the effectiveness of our teachers."*

**On Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>**, Senator Marc Panepinto stood united with Republican and Democratic lawmakers, teachers, administrators, school board members, and parents in a

critical push to strengthen awareness around New York's ill-vetted high stakes testing problem. The Senator called for a more pragmatic and unified approach to standardized exams and their implications on the future of our children. The gathering took place in Senator Panepinto's home district, the Kenmore-Tonawanda Union Free School District, where he grew up and attended public school. In addition to delivering the news that – after much contemplation – his family made the decision to opt out his 8<sup>th</sup> grade daughter from tomorrow's standardized tests, he made the following comments:

“With less than 24 hours before children across the New York sit down for their state exams, one thing is clear – the state has yet to address the excessive amount of problems that New Yorkers have with this flawed method of testing. Ill-vetted high stakes testing is a stress to students, parents, and educators not to mention an imperfect method for measuring student achievement, teacher effectiveness, and school progress. The paradigm is upside down. We are supposed to be educating our children to do well on tests, not educating them to evaluate their teachers. That's not what's supposed to happen in the classroom.”

In addition to Senator Panepinto, Assemblyman Walter, and Assemblyman Kearn's comments, several other regional education stakeholders also weighed in and spoke in front of the audience:

**Jennifer Morrow, Tonawanda Parent:**

“The focus on NYS standardized test scores has narrowed the curriculum to ELA and Math. There isn't a lot of time for other subjects. In order to educate the whole child we need art, music, recess/gym, social studies, and science. Elementary school is the time to expose kids to a wide variety of topics so that they can find their interests and passion. When you focus on improving test scores, the quality of education suffers.”

**Robyn Brydalski, Elementary Teacher in Ken-Ton School District:**

“As a third grade teacher, I witness our students’ first experiences with high stakes testing. I have watched 8 year olds brought to tears, frustration and even sickness. I have witnessed my IEP students give up, laying down on their desks while my Gifted and Talented Students persevere so hard, until the last minute only to receive a score of 1. I have had to turn my head to student questions. How is this fair? How is this just? As teachers, we look at an entire span of a school year to determine achievement and progress. As a parent of 2 young children, district resident, active community member and educator, I want my children and students to have a well-rounded education not focused on one measure; a high stakes test. Our students deserve to be more than a score - they should be prepared for their futures.”

**Jill O’Malley, Trustee/Ken-Ton UFSC School Board:**

“Clearly, the recent actions by the Board of Education demonstrate a recognition of the frustration the parents have regarding the suggested reforms tied to these evaluations. While we are not in a position to tell parents what to do with their children, we will be there to listen to the concerns of our community, as we have pledged to do so. We do encourage all stakeholders of the Ken-Ton school community to become informed and get involved in the policies that directly impact the education of their children. Now more than ever we must come together to voice our concerns on behalf of the children all across the state. We are thrilled Senator Panepinto is leading the way and we look forward to advocating with him.”

**Panepinto concluded with the following comments:**

“We stand together in the hopes that the state will seize the opportunity to reevaluate its current method and approach to high stakes testing and initiate significant dialogue within local communities to get to the crux of the problem. As we all feel today, there is too much at stake not to. The state needs to find common ground on this critical issue and do the right thing for our parents and students. I am confident, that if we work together, we can replicate

today's efforts across Western New York, accomplish meaningful consensus, and protect the future of public education for our children."