

The need for a moratorium on high-stakes consequences

The Issue

The state's rocky implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and new standardized tests jeopardizes the full, rich education every child deserves. The state must turn its attention away from its over-emphasis on testing and back to its responsibility for providing the time, tools, resources and professional development needed to achieve the potential of the Common Core. The state must listen to parents' and teachers' call for a three-year moratorium on high-stakes consequences to allow the time to get it right with Common Core implementation and to restore public confidence in New York's public education system.



New standards, tests have been rushed

New York must *put the brakes* on high-stakes consequences for students and teachers while *speeding up* the supports and resources needed to "get it right." The three-year moratorium must be accompanied by reform of state testing practices, including reducing the state's over-reliance on standardized tests; increasing the use of meaningful and authentic assessments; ensuring that state assessments are age- and grade-appropriate; mandating full transparency for test questions so parents and educators may use them to help students improve; and requiring privacy of student test data, preventing third-party, for-profit vendors from using student data without parental consent. New York state must act to provide the resources teachers and students need to get it right.

When they say:

You say:

We need to press forward with the use of test scores.

New York must slow down and take the time to get assessment right. A three-year moratorium is not a step away from high standards; it is a step toward getting them right.

The state's rushed timeline and poorly executed implementation, not surprisingly, produced meaningless data that must not be used for high-stakes consequences affecting students and teachers — such as promotion, class placements or employment decisions. It takes time to evaluate new assessments and make sure they are accurate, valid and reliable. It takes time to ensure that educators have curriculum, textbooks and other materials aligned with the new Common Core Learning Standards and the necessary professional development. It takes time for parents and students to adjust to these new, significantly more rigorous standards. Students should be taught before they are tested.

Standardized tests ensure accountability.

Standardized tests provide a snapshot of student learning, but far from the whole picture. Authentic assessments, such as portfolios, writing journals and end-of-course capstone projects, provide a far more comprehensive picture of what students know and can do. Research shows that such teacher-developed assessments have a five-times greater effect on student achievement than standardized tests. New York state needs to recalibrate away from an over-emphasis on standardized tests and toward greater reliance on authentic assessments, the fundamental method educators regularly use in the classroom.



