



2018 Opt Out Position Statement

The Spencerport Teachers Association supports a parent's right to opt his/her child out of the 3-8 Common Core tests. We stand by the assertions we have made since 2014.

- The tests are developmentally inappropriate, and they have never been independently tested for their validity or reliability.
- The tests are too long; while we acknowledge the progress of shortening each test from three days to two, we remain concerned with the lack of time limits. We believe it is educational malpractice to ask children to take an exam for an unlimited amount of time.
- The tests are a waste of taxpayer money, costing millions of dollars to produce, administer, and score, while providing minimal data to classroom teachers, and only once these students have moved on to a new grade.
- The tests shame and blame the students and teachers in our state's most diverse communities, and they are a "weapon of choice" for those who seek to privatize public education. Schools with low scores can face receivership, which can result in being taken over by a charter school. These tests do nothing to address New York State's segregated schools and inequitable funding.
- The test results are manipulated to fit a political narrative. They are scored in May, but the State Education Department (SED) does not release cut scores for months. The test results have repeatedly deemed 60-70% of 3rd—8th grade students as "failures," yet when these same students enter high school, their Regents exam passing rates are much higher. Furthermore, state-wide high school graduation rates are at an all-time high.
- The tests have led to a narrowed and unbalanced curriculum in too many classrooms across the state; the unfair reality for too many children is, "If it's not tested, it's not taught," resulting in hours of math and ELA instruction per day, and only minutes per day—or week—for other important subjects. Teachers need autonomy in their lesson planning to allow students to reach their full potential.
- The tests are secretive: teachers are prohibited from speaking about any part of the exam unless that part has been publicly released, allowing SED to keep questionable content from scrutiny.
- These tests are part of a disastrous attempt at "reform" in New York State that has, among many other unfortunate consequences, resulted in a severe teacher shortage that will undoubtedly affect children in poor communities first.
- Commissioner Elia thus far refuses to permanently decouple these tests from teacher evaluations; the STA stands with NYSUT in demanding an end to APPR and a return to local control. No two districts, no two schools, no two teachers, and no two students are alike, and SED's one-size-fits-all approach to teacher evaluation has failed teachers, students, and families.

In conclusion, the STA takes the position that after years of bad policy and poor exams, the onus is on the SED to prove that the exams are valid, reliable, and developmentally appropriate. SED must also take action to ensure that students across the state are not subjected to a "test-prep" curriculum that over-emphasizes ELA and math, at the expense of a well-rounded education. Children need music, art, physical education, social studies, science, recess and dramatic play to develop properly, grow, and thrive.