Erin O'Brien, Teacher

I have been a teacher for 14 years and I've already seen the pendulum swing in education multiple times (whole language, balanced literacy, STEM, etc). In every case, there have been positives and negatives and I've found that the key is finding the good things and integrating them into what is already working.

I think Common Core is the same. I find these standards easy to understand and they are much easier to use them for planning purposes. I do think that there are aspects that are not developmentally appropriate and some pieces that could be tweaked to make them more realistic.

However, there are two major problems with them - the connection between the standards and testing/APPR and the rushed implementation that forced everyone to jump into them without the proper training, materials, etc. As a result, I can only see one way to fix the problem - separate them from APPR plans, place a halt on tests, and give everyone (from State Ed right down to parents and children) the opportunity to catch up to the standards. Give us the opportunity to fill in some of the gaps students have missed. We can see what is working in our new curriculums and we can make revisions to ensure that the high standards are being achieved. We can evaluate materials to make sure that they are fully aligned to the standards. We can make sure that future testing matches the curriculum and is done transparently, so teachers, parents, and students know what is being tested. We can take the risks necessary to implementing something new without the stress of wondering how it will affect our evaluations. Most importantly, it will allow everyone to regain some trust in the State Education department and focus on what's most important - the students!