

Irena Jordan, Teacher, Rhinebeck Central School District

Common Core Learning Standards and Engage, together, are invaluable. It's about time that instruction was grade sequenced and learning milestones, baselines and standards were put into place. We desperately need those today, and teachers should be grateful for the abundance of instructional material now available to choose from - even though teachers have such limited time to explore that over-abundance. As usual, trying to keep up, absorb, and critically select instructional materials runs head-on into the very big time crunch factor. Unfortunately, the paramount usefulness of the changes has been compromised by bad press because of their connection to teacher evaluation [an unfair move, which has further been self-contradictorily compromised by high student exam-opt-out rates], and an over-hurried ELA standardized assessment product that is faulty - but which is now in the process of being properly reviewed. Therefore, the excellent Learning Standards have been jeopardized by public reaction to faulty implementation. Teacher evaluation cannot be tied to test results, especially to those of students with IEPs, 504s, and those below grade level achievement - AIS and Special Education teachers know how difficult it is to bring such students into growth and cohort achievement mode and alignment. Reality after hasty implementation has set in, and fix-ups must be made to address all of the above. A once-a-year test may not be the answer: perhaps PARCC had the better idea of quarterly assessments or a more spaced-out exam schedule rather than a whopper one-only at year's end - although such a test in April is too soon and self-defeating when there are still 2 months of instruction and learning to be had. Common Core is on the right path - it just needs to find the right balance of all the connecting factors, that is, the learning standards, student learning, teacher evaluation and standardized testing in a way that does not defeat the learning standards.