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As a child psychologist, I have been troubled by the changes forced on NY's public education system over the past few years by our political system. I hold the Governor primarily responsible. Common Core has many benefits, but the implementation has several fatal flaws. I will primarily focus on 2 of them due to space limitations.

First, linking teacher evaluations to student test scores is a misguided and dangerous practice. The belief that student test scores should be an important component of teacher evaluations is simple-minded and ignores the research that clearly shows teachers have a limited impact on student performance (10-20% of student achievement is due to the teacher). While test data may be useful at the State and even district level, there are too many variables that threaten the validity of the results when analyzed for an individual classroom. A tremendous amount of effort and money has been put into creating growth scores that control for some extraneous variables. However, the growth model itself is flawed. By judging growth through a comparison of students' performance relative to each other we are ranking our teachers relative to each other. A fair and effective evaluation system should measure how well a teacher promoted learning and growth in his/her students regardless of how well or poorly other teachers did.

A second fatal flaw is that the ELA and Math tests being administered to 3rd-8th graders are not valid or reliable. The evidence now clearly indicates these tests were poorly designed. The tests had too many questions and passages with reading levels far above the grade level being evaluated (I analyzed this myself with the released portions). The tests also measured multiple factors, including children's ability to fight off fatigue, solve multi-step problems, etc. Shortening the tests (and the amount of time it takes for the directions to be read each day of testing) is a step in the right direction, but in and of itself it is inadequate. A shorter version of an invalid test is still invalid. Until new tests are designed and are proven to be valid, reliable measures of student achievement we should not be relying on the data. If you truly feel the test data is valid, then the results should be used for student evaluations too. Linking flawed data to teacher evaluations is a key reason so many parents opted out. Until the NYS leadership understands this and makes meaningful changes I expect we will see even greater resistance to the tests. Since Common Core and the flawed tests have been so heavily linked, there will be even more pressure to abandon Common Core rather than fix what is wrong with it.

Additional fatal flaws that need to be addressed are the rhetoric from Governor Cuomo portraying public schools and teachers as the source of the problems, the rushed and botched implantation of Common Core, and the developmentally inappropriate content of Common Core, especially in the younger grades.