

Evan Stone, Co-Founder & Co-CEO, Educators 4 Excellence

My name is Evan Stone. I am a former teacher in the Bronx, the son of a teacher, and the co-Founder and co-CEO of Educators 4 Excellence, a teacher-led organization that places classroom educators at the forefront of the decisions that shape our classrooms and the profession. Our work in New York is shaped and directed by thousands of teacher members.

I'm here today to speak on behalf of teachers about one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented policies of our time – the Common Core Standards.

The Common Core Standards are simply that – a set of standards, meant to make sure all students are held to the same rigorous bar, and given the tools to succeed in a changing world. The Standards elevate the problem solving and critical thinking skills of our youth so that they can succeed in a modern workforce. After all, that is our mandate as educators – to send citizens into the world where they can be productive members of society.

When I was in the classroom, I had to teach over 100 unique math standards or topics. Today, under Common Core, I could focus on just 29 standards, giving me the time needed to ensure students are able to do more than just solve equations, but also grasp the underlying concepts. These standards let educators focus on what all teachers and parents actually want their kids to be able to do: think critically, analyze information to draw conclusions, and problem solve.

I work with teachers all over the city, and I can tell this task force that they are united in a desire to be effective. They want their students to be successful. But they need support. Common Core isn't the problem. Implementation is.

Many teachers are excited about the standards, but need the backing of their principals, districts, and the state Education Department. If we want the standards to translate into greater student achievement, then our teachers need state and district leaders to redouble their efforts to align curricula and support. In addition, teachers need time to unpack the standards and collaborate with their colleagues.

E4E teachers have called for specific changes around Common Core, including time to collaborate with their colleagues, a week of optional paid professional development each year, improved assessments for unique student populations, and the creation of a Common Core guide for parents whose children may be struggling. What we DO NOT need is yet another reset that will only throw our schools into chaos.

When some shout, "down with Common Core," they are really saying, "I need support in my classroom." When they say, "testing is bad," they are saying, "please create a test that is meaningful and fair." Please remember that the loudest voice is not the only voice, and that teachers want to use any means they can to help their students succeed

in school, and in life. Our schools are at a crossroads, and we cannot afford to back down from setting standards our students deserve.