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In recent years, educators, parents, and law makers have been embroiled in contentious discussions regarding the implementation of common core learning standards in New York public schools. While it is important to engage in dialogue across these stakeholder groups, there appears to be many agendas at play that undermine the ability of educators and parents alike to focus on student learning.

Educators in New York State have provided curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned to learning standards by content area since the mid 1990's. These standards have been reshaped and assessments have been redesigned throughout the past 20 years, expanding from 4th & 8th grade to 3-8 grades under NCLB. NYS Common Core Learning Standards represent the latest revision and have the potential to raise the level of learning for all of our students. These standards provide clarity by grade level (PreK-12) for content and performance expectations. As a 40 year educator in New York, I see great promise in these latest standards. The controversy lies not in the standards, but in the related assessments, teacher evaluation and related perceptions.

Educators know the value of assessment. However, under the current process of 3-8 assessment, educators no longer have productive access to local student performance. A limited sample of 'released questions' and restrictions on scoring have left teachers and administrators with vague answers to student performance beyond a scale score and performance level. The productive work of analyzing student performance data for trends in curriculum and instruction, is severely limited. Without the ability to look at actual local student work, we are relying on outside analysis and pre-determined comparisons. Productive data analysis processes have been critically compromised at the local level.

Educators have always been evaluated on annual basis. In my experience, local school systems have been fairly accurate in identifying needs for professional development, supporting teacher growth and holding teachers accountable for student performance. Throughout my career I have worked with colleagues, at both the teaching and administrative level, focused on continuous improvement. The current and future APPR mandates have served to undermine local systems, primarily due to the addition of a snapshot of student performance as a determining factor in teacher effectiveness. A career in teaching hinges on the success of students, on one day out of 180 days of learning.

As this task force seeks feedback and deliberates the next recommended course of action, I urge it to listen to the primary practitioners -- the educators. The standards are sound, and although some may be revised overtime, these are not the heart of the controversy. Rather, focus the energy on revamping both 3-8 assessments and APPR. External assessments are essential to learning. Return the value of these assessments as instructional tool to local educators, removing the restrictions for analysis of local

student work. Remove a 'one-time, 'one-day' assessment, with arbitrary and moving targets of performance targets, from APPR.

Teaching is a profession, and for many a passion. Return the accountability for both student and professional growth to the educators.