



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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Counting Things That Count

“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.”

This simple observation made by Albert Einstein captures our concerns with the State’s rollout of Common Core. It’s what caused parents and educators from across the political landscape and from across this great state to come together in opposition to artificial metrics of whether our children are “college and career ready”. It’s why hundreds of you joined me at a forum this Fall at Mineola High School to demand that the Common Core rollout be rolled back. It’s why we worked so hard to ensure that our childrens’ privacy is protected. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to get it.

To all the parents and educators who joined me in this fight, “Thank you.”

Don’t get me wrong, the fight’s not over. But when the New York Board of Regents, the group that sets education policy for our state, announced last week that it was postponing elements of the Common Core rollout, it marked the first time it acknowledged that things needed fixing. That’s quite a step and it wouldn’t have happened without us all standing up together. Again, “thank you.”

As we all know, the first step to fixing something is acknowledging it needs fixing. While the Regents' plan didn't address every issue, I believe it shows a glimmer of hope that common sense might eventually prevail over the Common Core. Their 19-point plan included these major revisions:

- A five year delay in aligning new Common Core standards to high school graduation. That means the class of 2022, third graders now, would be the first required to take and pass Common Core standard Regents Exams to graduate.
- Suspending indefinitely their plan to share student data with private third-party vendors like inBloom Inc.,
- Rejecting teacher and principal evaluations based on standardized testing for children in pre-K through second grade.
- Capping how much time schools can spend on standardized tests
- Developing new curriculum to address the needs of students with disabilities and those with limited English.
- Advising districts not to use state test results in grades 3-8 to make decisions on student promotion or placement.

What has not been resolved and what remains explosive is the role of student test scores in the teacher evaluation process. The issue is whether teachers can be fairly judged by the Common Core test scores of their students. Without a slower, more deliberate implementation of the system, the answer is a resounding "no". How can we rely on the test results of students who have had no materials, no preparation, and no time to adequately learn the Common Core? Simply put, teachers haven't had a fair opportunity to do what was

asked of them.

The truth is that the more difficult Common Core standards were hastily implemented and caused a precipitous and unfair drop in children's test scores. While everyone wants to raise the bar for our children, this abrupt roll-out meant our kids were being tested on materials and methods they had hardly been taught. That isn't fair to them or their teachers. The process was rushed and the results were disastrous.

The plan set forth by the Board of Regents is at least an important first step in correcting the problems of Common Core. More work needs to be done which means we can't sit back and wait for action. We must continue to participate, question, and demand. We'll do it together.

Perhaps in this way they can find a way to count what really counts and make sure our children learn it.