



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael H. Ranzenhofer

Monthly Column: It's Time to Correct the Common Core Learning Standards

MICHAEL H. RANZENHOFER September 15, 2015

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Look for...

Senator Mike Ranzenhofer's
Monthly Column

...In your local newspaper
the third week of every month

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With summer and Labor Day over, thousands of students have returned to the classroom for the beginning of a new school year.

Last week, recently-appointed State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia visited Sweet Home High School during a trip to Western New York. She assured teachers and parents a review of the Common Core Learning Standards, as well as areas for improvement, would be forthcoming.

Earlier this month, Governor Cuomo proposed a committee to develop recommendations for improving the learning standards.

For more than a year now, I have been outspoken in my criticism of the poor implementation of Common Core in our schools. I have joined parents, students, teachers, administrators and advocates in expressing disapproval.

Only 15 percent of residents expressed support for Common Core, while 46 percent opposed the curriculum, in my 2015 Constituent Questionnaire. A total of 17 percent said it was too early to tell and 16 percent of respondents were unsure. One out of every five students opted out of state assessments during the last school year.

Scantrons and stress shouldn't define our kids' education. They deserve better. It's time to correct the Common Core. That is why I voted for the Returning to Learning Agenda during this year's Legislative Session.

The initiative aims to further protect students and their schools by passing common-sense reforms that will empower parents and teachers, restore local control and address problems caused by an overemphasis on standardized testing.

The bill helps students by proposing measures to ensure state exams in grades 3 through 8 are grade-appropriate and time-appropriate. It also directs the State Education Department to release test questions and the corresponding correct answers to teachers by June 1st of the same school year so that tests will serve as a learning tool, not just a data collection device. Most importantly, the Returning to Learning Agenda requires the State Education Department to review the purpose and effectiveness of the Common Core standards.

These proposed reforms are good for parents, good for teachers, and good for our children. Taken together, each one of these reforms will help to ensure that our local schools will always be vibrant and rewarding places where our children can grow and thrive – not places where the school year is dominated by concerns about standardized testing.

If enacted by the State Assembly, these changes will build upon the reforms I helped to enact last year to ban standardized testing in pre-K through the second grade, limit the impact of assessments on student promotion and placement, and restrict the amount of time spent on test preparation.

The Returning to Learning Agenda is an educational reform plan to put our kids first. It will reduce testing, empower parents, and restore local control of our school districts. I encourage the State Assembly to act on this important legislation.

Senator Ranzenhofer's monthly column appeared in the Amherst and Clarence Bees on September 16th.