

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF HIGH STAKES TESTING

TEST LENGTH: 75 minutes (ELA)/85 minutes (Math)

Tests publicly released in entirety

Growth in student test scores not a factor in teacher evaluations

Annual testing in grades 3-8 begin statewide\*

\* Prior to 2006 NYC children were tested annually but the rest of the state only tested grades 4 and 7

NYS passes new law requiring that teacher evaluations be based 20-40% on growth in student test scores (remaining 60% based on observations)

TEST LENGTH: 150 minutes (ELA)/100-140 minutes (Math)

Growth in student test scores now 20%-40% of teacher evaluations

TEST LENGTH: 270 minutes (ELA)/270 minutes (Math)

Tests no longer publicly released. Neither parents nor teachers are able to view details of child's test results.

TEST LENGTH: 210-270 minutes (ELA)/210-270 minutes (Math)

K-2 testing introduced at 36 NYC early elementary schools

TEST LENGTH: 210-270 minutes (ELA)/190-250 minutes (Math)

NY State Department of Education announces opposition to K-2 testing

50% of questions from state tests are released (anecdotal evidence suggests that the worst questions were not released)

2006

Teachers Group Seeks Changes in Education Law:

'the government's "obsessive" focus on testing student skills and punishing failing schools undermines education, said Becky Pringle, a member of the National Education Association's Executive Committee'

2010

2011

NYC DOE releases teacher evaluations (known as Teacher Data Reports/TDR) to the news media with caveat that the margin of error ranges from 35 to 53%.

2012

First year of the Pearson test contract.

Infamous "Pineapple and Hare" passage.

2013

PS 321 hosts Teachers Talk Testing: Educators discuss the effects of high stakes testing on their students as well as their teaching.

Over 80% of parents at Castle Bridge Elementary School refuse K-2 testing; leading principal to cancel tests at this Washington Heights school.

2014

NY State Principals Letter To Parents outlines multiple deep concerns about current tests. Co-authored by Liz Phillips and 7 fellow principals, signed by 557 NY State Principals and 3500 supporters.

Liz Phillips and Carol Burrell co-author 'Why APPR Must be Changed', published in New York State ASCD journal.

American Statistical Association cautions against the use of growth in student test scores to evaluate teachers, saying "VAMs typically measure correlation, not causation."

PS 321 sends school-wide email inviting parents and children to protest the quality of 2014 ELA tests just completed, saying, "The teachers and administration are truly devastated by what a terrible test it was and how little it will tell us about our students."

"I do believe any parent or person who works with children, who saw this test, would be absolutely shocked," said Principal Liz Phillips.

PS 321's rally sparks similar protests at dozens of schools across the city.

Gov Cuomo introduces new education proposal increasing weight of test scores in teacher evaluations to 50%. The proposal also mandates outside evaluators, diminishing the principal observation component to 15% (Principal observation was 100% of a teacher's evaluation in 2005 and 60% from 2011 through the present.)

Legislators vote "with heavy hearts" to adopt Cuomo's proposals.

NYS legislature passes responsibility for working out details about teacher evaluation to the Board of Regents, but limits them to a very narrow matrix that mandates heavy emphasis on test scores. Seven of the 17 Regents express their disapproval of the teacher evaluation policy publicly and propose an alternative vision.

NY State relaxes "gag order" restrictions preventing teachers from discussing standardized tests. However, rule stating that teachers who proctor exams cannot read them remains in place.

NYS Board of Regents vote 10-6 in favor of temporarily passing new rules on teacher evaluations and also vote unanimously to require NYS Education Commissioner Elia to write letter to Gov Cuomo expressing lack of confidence in current evaluation system.

Pearson's contract is not renewed. They will be replaced by Questar, a company with little experience, and with a directive to develop online tests.

Following the rallies, Liz Phillips writes Op Ed for the NYTimes: We Need to Talk About the Test, which highlighted the absurdity of the gag order: "I'd like to tell you what was wrong with the tests my students took last week, but I can't."

New York State Teachers Union (NYSUT) files lawsuit challenging the "gag order" that prohibits teachers from discussing contents of tests, saying "Teachers must be free to protect their students and speak out when they have concerns about state tests. Instead, they are under a 'gag order' to be silent – and that is hurting children."

60,000 opt out of New York State tests.

## 2015

PS 321 (and many other schools) organizes letter writing campaigns, holds Protect Our Schools rallies, attends Town Hall meetings with Regents, and travels to Albany to meet with Legislators, appealing for a common sense teacher evaluation plan, and age appropriate assessments for children.

220,000 opt out of New York State tests, more than triple the prior year and 20% statewide.

New York City opt out numbers rise from 350 students to more than 7,900. District 15 had the highest opt out rates in NYC, and PS 321 was one of the leaders.