

Get teacher-evaluation law right

Albany must not fall for specious NYSUT argument on best way to assess learning

BY IAN ROSENBLUM AND EVAN STONE

Highly skilled educators are critical to providing students with a quality education and opening doors of opportunity for their futures.

The state has a fundamental responsibility to improve students' access to great educators, while supporting teachers to become even more effective.

That's why for us, it's so troubling that the New York State United Teachers — the state's largest teachers union — is pushing lawmakers in the final weeks of the state legislative session to make the teacher evaluation system irrelevant.

Though New York's teacher evaluation law is far from perfect, this particular "cure" may be worse than the disease.

NYSUT's proposal, which has passed the State Assembly, supports more testing for students and risks making teacher evaluations meaningless — a disservice to teachers and students alike. And with a moratorium in place stopping districts from using third-through-eighth

grade English language assessment and math test results in teacher evaluations while the state Education Department launched a collaborative process to improve evaluations, their proposal appears to be a solution in search of a problem.

However, as written, the legislation is a big step in the wrong direction. The bill, which dramatically expands collective bargaining to permanently remove state assessments from evaluations, is likely to lead to more — and unnecessary — local testing.

Instead of state assessments, teacher evaluations might now be based on a menu of "alternative assessments." But state assessments are still required under federal law, so any new assessments will add to the tests students take.

In addition, the bill risks making teacher evaluation meaningless. Based on NYSUT's comments, it wants to see more teachers evaluated on tests in subjects they don't teach and for students they don't teach — even when there is a good as-



The state must ensure all students have access to a great education.

assessment already available. That simply makes no sense.

Finally, the bill eliminates any consistency across school districts. Since each of New York's roughly 700 school districts could have different tests or use them in different ways, the bill would eliminate safeguards that help ensure the students most in need of highly skilled teachers have equitable access to them.

Getting the teacher evaluation law right matters for two important reasons:

First, basing teacher evalua-

tion on the right factors can have a major impact on student learning and on teachers' professional experiences. State law requires that evaluation be a "significant factor for employment decisions" like retention, tenure and termination, and for professional support like coaching and training. If the feedback is based on the wrong things, those crucial decisions will have less value.

Second, having a meaningful and consistent statewide system of teacher evaluation shines a light on whether historically un-

derstood students are being given access to strong educators.

According to the Education Department, low-income students in high-poverty schools are 11 times more likely to be taught by a teacher rated ineffective than non-low-income students in low-poverty schools. Likewise, students of color in high-poverty schools are 13 times more likely to be taught by a teacher rated ineffective than white students in low-poverty schools.

There are two ways to make this educational injustice disappear: by identifying, supporting, recruiting and retaining the best teachers to serve in the schools with the greatest needs — or by masking the problem.

Instead of destroying the teacher evaluation system — and forcing students to take more tests — let's get it right.



Ian Rosenblum is executive director of The Education Trust-New York, and Evan Stone is co-founder and co-CEO of Educators for Excellence.



Elizabeth Alvarado and Robert Mickens, parents of Nisa Mickens, who was slain by MS-13 gang members in 2016, attend a roundtable discussion with President Donald Trump in Bethpage on May 23.

Just because MS-13 has not killed anybody on Long Island in a year doesn't mean the problem has gone away. Gang activity continues to afflict our communities and the rest of our nation. But the editorial board describes the real problem as "a wave of young people from Central America," otherwise

known as unaccompanied minors, placing a burden on our communities and towns. But wouldn't the president's proposals, including securing our borders, ending the visa lottery and limiting "chain migration," help eliminate this problem?

The first step is to stop the cause: illegal immigration.

Spending more money to accommodate immigrants here illegally is not the answer; it will only encourage more unaccompanied minors to come to Long Island. We must control illegal immigration while using our nation's resources to help people who are here legally.

Rick Choinski,
St. James

Albany should further restrict tanning beds

The New York State Senate has an opportunity to protect our state's teens from a future of skin cancer. I hope it seizes this opportunity. The Assembly has passed legislation to close a loophole that allows 17-year-olds to use dangerous indoor tanning devices ["Tanning salon bill would ban minors," News, May 31]. But the Senate hasn't acted.

The American Cancer Society says almost 5,000 New York residents will be diagnosed with skin cancer this year. I am

inspired to write this as a survivor of throat cancer. Also, I would not want my 17-year-old daughter to have access to tanning beds. If we do not protect them, our teens will be added to those numbers in the future.

Most kids don't realize the dangers of indoor tanning. Tanning before the age of 35 increases the risk of melanoma by 59 percent. Major organizations including the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network are calling on the State Senate to pass this bill.

I, too, ask Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan and his colleagues to pass this bill before session adjourns. If we can protect our kids from skin cancer, shouldn't we?

Michele Brodtman,
Babylon

Editor's note: The writer is a volunteer with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, located in North Babylon

Dental treatment can be expensive, too

I understand the cost of educating a dentist is high, but your story didn't mention the fees dentists charge patients ["Dental work: Why fewer dentists are opening private practices," Business, May 27].

I had a broken tooth and had to have a root canal in preparation for a tooth replacement. One root canal in 45 minutes cost me \$1,450.

Unreal.

Michael Vigliotti,
East Setauket

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