

Teachers Want Change In State Evaluations

BY ERIN MCKINLEY

The Southampton Teachers Association is calling for reforms to state tests and teacher evaluations that they say in some instances assign grades to teachers based on the performance of students they have never taught. According to Teachers Associ-

ation Vice President Kelly Anderson, recent state educational reforms—which include evaluating teachers based on students' test scores while simultaneously changing how the tests are graded—are not fair to educators, and they fail to adequately mea-

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sure the actual progress that students are making.

Ms. Anderson said the tests and evaluation systems should be revamped using input from educators, administrators and parents to focus on the students and the progress they are making, and not pushing children beyond their achievement level.

"Yes, education needs to change, and the way that some of these districts are set up there are kids that are not benefiting from instruction," Ms. Anderson said. "We now understand that you cannot use tests to sort them into college or career—we want all kids to be college- and career-ready. So in order for that to happen we need to change the way we teach, and we can't do that with the test."

The frustrations among teachers throughout New York State have been high since the Common Core tests were first introduced but spiked in April, when Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced the Education Transformation Act of 2015, which increases the state education aid by \$1.3 billion, but ties strings to the money, including new teacher evaluations.

The current evaluation plan for teachers includes three components, with 60 percent of a teacher's score based on evaluations, 20 percent on a local assessment determined by administrators, and 20 percent based on the state assessments. The new teacher evaluation will change the system so that 50 percent is based on a number called the "principal's number," which is assigned to school dis-

tricts based on results of the English language arts and math assessments.

Ms. Anderson said the problem is that not all educators teach ELA or math, meaning that a large portion of those teachers' final effectiveness grade is based on a subject they do not teach, and, often, students who have never been in their classroom. The remaining 50 percent of the grade will be divided between observations and local assessments.

"At 20 percent, we could rationalize the principal's score, because other subjects can incorporate math and ELA," Ms. Anderson said. "But to say that 50 percent of a teacher's score is now going to be based on work that someone else is doing? It is absurd with the test-driven instruction."