

October 29, 2013

Testimony for Public Hearing - Senate Education Committee  
RE: The Regents Reform Agenda: "Assessing" Our Progress  
Senate Hearing Room, 19th Floor  
250 Broadway, New York City

**Stop InBloom & Protect Student Privacy:**

My name is Lisa Shaw and I have four children as students in NYC public schools. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am horrified that the NYSED is giving my children's private personal information away without my consent! It is a parents right to protect their children from the unspeakable which is InBloom. Why should everything a school collects about my children be hosted on an amazon cloud then sold or given to companies who will profit off the data, by marketing materials to schools and probably parents and students later? Parents are told the cloud data is safe but is there any safe cloud? ...in-fact InBloom denies any responsibility for breaches!

Identity-Theft is the fastest growing crime in America; Who would suspect our public schools could allow this to spread? When students name, DOB, race, address, parents details, personally, identifiable, information such as test scores, grades, attendance, discipline, learning style, IEP classification, related services, doctors name, prescriptions, and disabilities are fed into the InBloom enumerations fields, I consider it Identify Theft and a violation of HIPPA laws as intended. Giving students data to any vendor that networks with the NYSED is part of the InBloom plan but taking back the data is impossible for parents. Even if the InBloom contract canceled, what happens to the students data that was shared with multiple vendors afterwards?

InBloom's longitude files will track a child's test scores or IEP classification and follow them through their career, even though many children out grow their disabilities or classifications as they mature. Also, there are no checks and balances to confirm the data is correct by parents in InBloom. Unchecked private information, especially that which could unfairly prejudice educational institutions and potential employers against a student is unethical. I am worried for the children who have IEP's, or are in Foster Care, ELL, and others. Who are speaking for those children?

### **My Appeals to Opt-Out:**

I have contacted so many local, state and federal government agencies asking for help to allow my children to opt-out. In fact, Ken Wagner, John King and Chancellor Walcott failed to reply to multiple phone calls and emails begging for a way to opt-out of InBloom the past year. NY officials are completely unresponsive to parents concerns. I asked Chancellor Wolcott at a town hall meeting, "Why didn't you backpack home a letter informing parents about InBloom?", but he failed to answer. Do education officials hear parents' pleas and protests? Shame on John King, the DOE, and the NYSED for selling out all the students of New York. Other states heard parents pleas and pulled out from InBloom. Smaller classes will support children's learning, not data mining. My 7 year olds are in classes with 30 students, which is largest in 14 years!

### **My Solution is Refuse Data Input:**

Let me tell you the extent I go to escape InBloom. The only way is to stop feeding the data beast is to deny the data! Deny signature on Medicaid forms for related services, deny filling out school lunch forms or any other school forms, deny photos, assessments, or videos for teacher evaluations including SLO's, and MOSL's and state Math and ELA tests. Parents have the right under FERPA to withdraw their consent for Medicaid at any time. No personal narratives about our family is allowed in the schools. My children are not to be used for educational profits by corporations. To avoid the invasive nature of InBloom, I may enroll in private school or move to another state. Hopefully, the Student Privacy bill S5930-2013 will pass which will protect student privacy, which I support.

Private and especially sensitive information that could specifically identify and prove potentially injurious to students should not be disclosed without parents consent. Despite the weakening of privacy laws, this is in fact criminal. Do Parents have to change their children's names and Social Security numbers to escape the long claws of InBloom dicing up a child's life into 400 data points for the prying eyes of any vendor?

Parents are frustrated by the non-consensual use of their children's data. Re-disclosure of data to unlimited parties bypasses parental rights. These are my children not the ward of the State or Federal Government! Small class sizes will provide personalized learning, not expensive and injurious data mining partnered with school dashboards to line the pockets of Gates, Murdoch, or Pearson.

## **Problems with Common Core State Standards**

Common Core State Standards were not state developed, it is a national, top-down curriculum that governors were coerced to sign onto and it bypassed Congress. The CCSS are the solution to a problem that doesn't exist. I've never heard an educator say there are not enough ideas about curriculum in the world. Designing exciting curricula is one of the main things educators do; they are doing it all the time. I have seen my children's classes change from enriching curriculum to concentrations on Math and ELA. No longer can teachers encourage students strengths and support students weakness because of the ridged CCSS curriculum. All students are expected to read at grade level during class while only books read at home can be on the child's reading level. How does this support students who must learn to decode and improve reading comprehension skills for the informational text?

The CCSS curriculum is developmentally inappropriate especially at the younger grades. I was shocked to learn my child had to read books that discussed a mothers abandonment of her child over and over and the mother's alcoholism with text describing the love of whiskey or beer. Why does my 7 year old have to discuss these topics in class? This does not promote family values and it conditions children to accept these topics at a young age. The K-2 testing that has begun this year is child abuse for very young children. Young pre-K children should enjoy art, music, and trips in a play based school instead of test prep worksheets.

My children do homework from the time they get off the bus to bedtime, with only breaks for dinner and a shower. It takes the whole evening to finish all the reading of 30-40 minutes per night each child, multiple worksheets including confusing math word problems, and paragraph writing. The reading is expected to be 50 minutes per night before the end of this year. How does this leave us any family time? I have watched my children go from loving school to asking why it is school so hard? Students feel like failures because of the heavy curriculum demands. Even if students do not take the pre, mid, end of year assessments if they opt-out, the test prep is throughout the year. Meanwhile, I have watched our schools loose funds for reading and math support that is necessary to help students from falling behind, not to mention the extracurricular classes.

The CCSS are at best a mediocre addition to the crowded field for what knowledge and skills children should develop at what stages in their educations. The CCSS have been sold to the public as a solution to the problem of low achievement, but if that's really the goal we should take all the money now being wasted on the inefficient implementation of the poorly designed standards and direct it to measures we know help struggling students: small class sizes, early education programs, and wrap around support for schools in need. I watched my school hire a yoga teacher for calming students during testing season and some students become ill or fainted during the state tests.

The CCSS have also been promoted by state education authorities as an essential step towards instilling greater capacity for critical thinking; yet those same state authorities ignore the very cogent arguments against the standards and their associated testing presented by growing numbers of parents and teachers across the state and country. Here's a news flash: standardized tests by definition cannot assess original thought; they can at best, and imperfectly, assess a student's ability to guess what the test designers already think and want students to regurgitate.

From where I stand, it appears the CCSS benefit no one but the companies selling materials required by their implementation. Far from improving the quality of instruction, they have if anything been driving some of the best teachers from the field. My message is: Stop. Withdraw from RTTT, cancel the CCSS, restore control over curriculum and assessment to local communities, initiate a moratorium right now on all state-mandated standardized testing in our schools, and reintroduce it only when and if all public schools in the state have decent facilities, libraries, gyms, art rooms, and class sizes that allow teachers to reach every child in their care. School districts across the state are desperately strapped for resources; we don't have a penny or a second more to waste on the destructive path of high-stakes testing and mediocre top-down curriculum mandates.

Beyond CCSS, the most disturbing problem in New York is the sharing of students most personal information without parental consent. Please hear the parents of NY who want to opt-out their children from being data-mined by InBloom.

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