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Testimony at New York State Assembly Education Forum
Mental Health Ramifications of Common Core

On October 10th, 2013 I testified at the New York State Assembly Education Forum on the mental health ramifications of the Common Core. The full text of my testimony can be viewed at: http://stopccsinnys.com/uploads/Al_Graf_-_Mary_Calamia_full_text.pdf

My oral testimony may be viewed at: <http://stopccsinnys.com/AlGrafForums.html>. My testimony begins at 5:30.

I am a licensed clinical social worker in private practice on Long Island. I work with students, parents and teachers representing more than 20 different school districts.

Last year, the New York State Education Department fully implemented the Common Core State Standards in our schools. Since its implementation, I have observed:

- a 2-300% increase in new referrals of adolescents who are self-mutilating. The majority of these newly referred youngsters are honors students with no prior history of self-mutilation. They cite the pressures of the increased workload, standardized testing, and feelings of failure as the top reasons for this behavior,
- a 2-300% increase in new referrals of elementary school children due to school refusal and anxiety. The majority of these children say they feel “stupid” and “hate school.” These are children with no prior history of anxiety or school refusal. They are throwing tantrums, begging to stay home, and are upset even to the point of vomiting,
- a marked increase in self-mutilating behaviors, insomnia, panic attacks, depressed mood, school refusal, and suicidal thoughts during the state exam cycle last spring,
- children are being exposed to age-inappropriate lessons geared to adult learning patterns, not childhood ones. Children are not capable of engaging in the critical thinking the Common Core requires. Critical thinking requires achieving a developmental milestone that does not occur until early adulthood,
- parents complaining that the educational system is driving a wedge between them and their children. They are the ones who have to enforce homework completion and make their distressed children go to school. Also, there are no textbooks to clarify what their children are learning. They cannot help their struggling children with their studies,
- a strain on the teachers that is causing a palpable level of distress in the schools.

I will be happy to answer any questions or interview on this issue.

Sincerely,
Mary Calamia, LCSW, CASAC