

Common Core tests giving kids anxiety

Anxiety

School psychologists see stressful effects of exams

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ALBANY — State tests are the ones that are stressing kids out, school psychologists in New York said.

About three-quarters of school psychologists from among the state's nearly 700 school districts said state tests are causing greater anxiety than local assessments, a survey released Friday by the state School Boards Association and the state Association of School Psychologists found.

The anxiety hasn't, for the most part, led to physical ailments, the school psychologists said, but the new Common Core testing has translated into students feeling more stressed.

"This report should make all education stakeholders — from state policymakers to local teachers to parents — aware of the profound impact that they can have, both positive and negative, on student test anxiety," Timothy Kremer, executive director of the School Boards Association, said in a statement.

Six in 10 school psychologists said the Common Core learning standards, which includes state exams for students in third through eighth grades each April, has increased students' anxiety.

The report contended that the test anxiety is more common at the elementary-school level, saying

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students more often showed "internalized" symptoms such as excessive worry and withdrawal rather than demonstrating "externalized" symptoms, such as increased irritability, frustration and acting out.

Maybe school psychologists have problems with answering questions, too. The school groups asked 1,672 school psychologists to respond to the survey, but just 13 percent responded.

The report is the latest in recent days to analyze the impact of the Common Core testing, which started in 2013, and has drawn widespread criticism from parents, teachers and students.

A report released Thursday by the state Council of School Superintendents showed that superintendents largely agreed that the Common Core tests can be improved, but said the standards are having a positive impact on education.

The state Education Department and Gov. Andrew Cuomo have convened separate panels to figure how to improve the Common Core testing and teacher evaluations, which are based in part on student performance. In April, 20 percent of students opted out of the tests.

School psychologists said the report hopefully will offer tips to parents, teachers and students on how to deal

with stress about testing.

For example, nearly 90 percent of school psychologists who responded to the survey believed that teachers' expectations contributed at least somewhat to test anxiety. Eighty-eight percent said that parents' expectations also contributed to students' stress.

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