

# **TESTIMONY TO THE ASSEMBLY MINORITY FORUM**

***October 10, 2013***

Good evening, members of the panel. My name is John Verdone; I am President of the Board of Education for the Sayville School District. I have been a Board Member since 2003. Sayville has approximately 3,300 students enrolled in our Schools.

As the panel may know, 48 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Common Core Learning Standards. My fellow trustees as well as our Superintendent believe the Common Core Learning Standards have merit; our community has and will continue to support, maintain, and make strides to improve the performance of students of Sayville. Everyone in our community wants our children to be successful, our teachers, our administrators our parents. I am proud of the accomplishments of our students and the continued support of our community.

70% of our students are attending 4-year schools with over 4.1 million dollars in scholarships

97% of our students received Regents Diplomas;

45% received a Regents Diploma with advanced designation;

25% received a Regents Diploma with advanced designation with honors;

49% of our 8th Graders met the High School mathematics measure for College-and-Career Ready, with an 80 or above on the High School Algebra Regents. 31% of the same students met the 8th Grade measure.

As I was preparing my testimony, I came across the following statement a fellow Board of Education Trustee from a neighboring district posted on my Facebook page.

“Childhood is not a race to see how quickly a child can read, write and count. Childhood is a small window of time to learn and develop at the pace which is right for each individual child”.

Our window of time with these children is short; we want our children to be successful and be lifelong learners.

There was no common sense to the implementation of common core. The state and its lawmakers have rushed its implementation and by doing so, you have broken the spirit of our children, you have broken the spirit of our teachers, you have broken the spirit of our parents and our administrators. Our children, who were once successful, are no longer according to the exams. What do we tell these children, what do we tell the parents, the teachers and the community.

One can understand why the test opt-out movement is growing in numbers throughout the state. Especially, after commissioner King has stated the exams were not true measures of the students

or the ability of the teacher. One has to ask what the purpose of these exams was. Possibly Pearson has answer to that question.

How can we label a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader “not college or career ready” if they do not meet level of the test makers? What are we doing to our children?

As a Board Member, I am always concerned with funding, state aid, unfunded and underfunded state and federal mandates.

Sayville taxpayers have spent \$250,000.00 for scoring, testing, and printing. In addition to the state not taking complete responsibility for these cost, the results did not measure anything worthwhile and detracted from the education of our students and made our teachers look ineffective. As my Superintendent stated earlier, the state should take full responsibility for state testing.

Furthermore, the state, as well as the federal government, held our children as ransom. Unless the state agreed to adopt the Common Core Standard we would not have been eligible for Race to The Top funding. Sayville received approximately \$16,000 spread over four years and 5 buildings; we have spent many times that amount for its implementation.

My fellow Sayville Board Members and I, as well as board members throughout the State of New York, are elected officials. Like you, we are not only accountable to our constituents, but to the children and taxpayers of the community. We know our community; we know what needs to be done. Local control plays and will continue to play a vital role. We want our children to be successful, much like you. The erosion of local control is and will continue to be a major concern.

We need to take a hard and truthful look into the future, and we need to ask ourselves: are we doing what is best for our children? We also need to take a truthful look at the harmful impact this initiative is having on all shareholders. I will strongly advocate that school board members have a seat at the “Table” during any discussions and reforms of the Common Core initiative.

Let’s slow down and take a breath and do it right. We owe it to the most important asset our community has: our children. We need a Common Sense approach to Common Core.