



## PEEKSKILL CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Interim Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Members of the Peekskill School Community,

Upon my recommendation, our Board of Education recently passed a formal resolution opposing the way the New York State is micromanaging testing and teacher evaluations. Recently, I joined over 40 other regional superintendents in calling on Governor Cuomo and the NYS legislature to amend the educational regulations that were hastily attached to the annual budget bill in an eleventh hour press in order to pass the state budget on time. Although some legislators have called for the delaying of these regulations, the fact is that a temporary postponement will not fix something that requires a great deal of thought and planning. My own analysis is that if the legislation is not amended, our students may suffer in several ways:

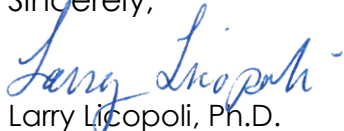
1. The current culture of unproven high stakes over-testing will become more and more problematic for school districts with high free and reduced lunch rates and high non-English speaking newcomer populations. These assessments do not take into account the instructional challenges in meeting the needs of this population, which in no way or form compare to those of high-wealth homogeneous suburban schools. Additional complications arise with these evaluation methods when one considers the potential for effective teachers to be assessed as ineffective because the rate of growth from these assessments are not sensitive to where students are developmentally when they enter a school system. This oversight is **unacceptable**. Moreover, many students who make substantial personal gains will still be viewed as being less than successful and labeled as “behind” using these assessments’ methodology. Any assessment plan that does not honor an individual student’s learning growth beyond what is expected is not a good assessment.
2. Good effective teachers who are successful in our District, or have the potential to be successful, may be let go despite our principals’ and/or my own professional evaluation of their work. The new rules are that Albany will decide who is let go based on an unproven methodology and an unsound statewide formula that is being applied to students’ test results.

3. Local control and authority over our schools' management will continue to be taken away. The Peekskill City School District has built a plan for improving student learning based on the proven practices adapted from other successful poor city schools —schools that have “beat the odds.” Our plan is predicated on building a strong foundation that focuses on literacy, enrichment, equity, and student choice all within the advantages of being in a culturally diverse and enriched community. I find it hard to believe anyone thinks that Albany's management of the Peekskill City School District could possibly improve our performance and our researched based plan for success. It would be a tragedy if the State were to change our plan and the journey we are taking.
4. Loss of local school control also means that districts like ours will be drawn away from our primary mission of insuring that all students reach the appropriate level of literacy by the end of Grade 3 **and** building a high quality educational program that is equivalent to our neighboring suburban schools. While it is unlikely that the result of this legislation will impact students in affluent homogeneous suburban schools from attending the college of their choice, students in more culturally diverse and poorer communities with high free and reduced lunch rates may very well be impacted due to their being subjected to bias and unfair comparisons by the very nature of these assessment plans. Our students need the instructional quality that we are implementing to ensure their growth in literacy and to experience more enrichment, equity and choices that equal those provided to students in our neighboring suburban school districts.

As of today, more than 17,000 individuals have electronically signed the petition listed below. Most are from Long Island and Westchester. I hope you will take a moment to check out the link and consider adding your name. I would like to note that this message and the petition are solely the product of a group of school superintendents of which I am a member of and obviously endorse. Please check our website for further information and for a statement from the New York State School Boards Association and the New York State Council of School Superintendents. The petition can be found at: <http://bit.ly/GetItRightNY>

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Larry Licopoli, Ph.D.

Interim Superintendent of Schools

cc: Board of Education