

Dr. Lorna Lewis
Statement April 4, 2016

I have received communication from several parents with regards to the statement I made in a Newsday article on **Opt out**, recently. This statement was made in response to a question raised by the reporter about the statement made by the newly appointed Chancellor Rosa “ If I were a parent I would opt my kids out of the test” . My response was directed solely at the inappropriate response of the head of the State Education Department, who in her time in office presided over the construction of those same tests and approved the arbitrary and capricious cut scores to gerrymander the results of 3-8 assessments. All superintendents are required to administer these exams under the commissioner’s regulations, issued through the Board of Regents. No one knows better than I do how engaged POB parents are. That is a given for any superintendent serving here. Parents have the right to decide on their children’s involvement with the test and we have clearly articulated the options to parents in our communication on the website and in an e-blast. All requests will be honored on the day of the test.

The Opt-out movement, which began on Long Island, has brought necessary focus on the poorly constructed 3-8 tests. They have accomplished what superintendents could not do, despite focused efforts and appeals to NYSED to attend to the length and inappropriate format of the 3-8 tests. Through their activism we now have 21 recommendations from a Governor’s Task Force that have put in place a moratorium on linking teacher evaluation with the results of the 3-8 tests . This from the same Governor that constructed the APPR law, 3012-d that requires us to put in place some form of assessment that ties student performance to teacher accountability.

The law is still the one we live by and we must now find other tests to serve as the 50% score for teacher accountability by July 1, 2016. Engagement with legislatures around delinking teacher evaluation and state aid needs to be the next step to address a bad law that serves no purpose to advance teaching and learning. Last week I was engaged in the process of calling and writing to every Long Island legislators to delink 3012-d from a loss of state aid. Despite sharing with them the unprecedented number of students who would refuse the test, and thus further discredit the APPR process, senators remained steadfast in their support of this flawed law.

In this tax cap era, our district is more dependent than ever on state aid, as our only other major source of revenue is the tax levy. A fair share of state aid is of utmost importance to our taxpayers. Of greater importance, however, is that state aid directly contributes to our ability to maintain a high quality educational program for our students. This funding should be free from political strings which as we know from past experiences can change on a moment’s notice. Our children should not have to be caught up in these politicized wars. The APPR process is an important one which should be dealt with in a thoughtful and separate manner from the state budget. By linking the two, the state is potentially denying communities the needed increase in state aid (over \$736K at risk for POB). This must be our focus.

3012D, is a flawed law that needs to be repealed. Let us not lose sight of this. Your voice is needed in this next important phase.