

Dear Elected Official:

As parents of children attending schools in Westchester County, we urge you to become involved in the return of meaningful local control of our schools.

During the past 30 years, local school districts have gradually lost policy-making discretion to state legislatures and bureaucracies. States' efforts to achieve equity and improve student and teacher performance have considerably diminished local controls over funding, standards, and curricular content. To restore balance, states can avoid prescribing the details of school practice, and school boards can assert their leadership role. **School Boards, elected and appointed by their communities represent the community's beliefs and values. Who better than these community representatives to shoulder the responsibility for preparing children to live productive and successful lives?**

Westchester County has a long history of excellent schools with a remarkable track record of student success both in our public schools and among our graduates who attend the finest universities in the nation. With all due respect to the State of New York, we simply do not need, require or deserve the current micro-managerial constraints and costs associated with new unfunded mandates promoted by the Race to the Top and its attached APPR requirements. **In the last two years, the Blind Brook School District received \$0 in Race To The Top (RTT) funding while the requirements associated with the implementation of APPR cost the District in excess of \$100,000.**

***Additionally, for the 2012-2013 school year, the 18 Lower Hudson Valley School Districts are being left "holding the bag" with an estimated \$5,951,751 in unfunded costs for Common Core, 3012C Training Assessments, Technology and Professional Development. APPR testing costs will run anywhere from \$502,560 to \$1,313,760 among districts.*** (Center for Research, Regional Education Outreach, State University of New York at New Paltz – Federal Mandates on Local Education: Costs and Consequences – Yes, it's a Race, but is it in the Right Direction, Discussion Brief #8 – Fall 2012)

The focus on and cost of these initiatives has virtually halted all sensible, creative, innovative practice in schools in the service of test prep and narrowed curriculum aimed at "test only" content. **It is simply unethical for us to be providing an antiquated model of test prep instruction so that teachers and students can prepare for the "highest scores" on standardized tests that do not reflect the types of learning that we value in our Westchester schools.**

Unfunded mandates, APPR, the 2% property tax levy cap with so few exemptions and new demands around data reporting, standards and assessment are crippling our local districts and destroying any chance that we can continue to provide the demonstrated high quality education that we have always provided in our Westchester schools. **As parents and taxpayers, we will not continue to support a system that creates a future that is unsustainable and unreliable for students, teachers, schools and communities.**

We urge you to meet and work with our local superintendents to explore ways to regain local control of our schools.

Sincerely,