



LEVITTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Levittown Memorial Education Center
150 Abbey Lane
Levittown, New York 11756
"Success for Every Student"



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Dear Sirs:

On behalf of the Levittown Board of Education and the Teachers and Administrators of the Levittown School District, I am writing to express our deep concerns over the trend we see developing in the field of education.

Levittown is a middle class community, comprising roughly 53,000 residents. Levittown School District is one of the largest on Long Island, serving approximately 7,500 students in 10 schools. We offer a wide variety of services to our children, from a comprehensive continuum of special education services, to an award winning Career and Technical Education program, to a nationally recognized music program – we live our motto, *Success for Every Student*.

Our teachers and administrators work hard and deeply care about our students. Teaching is their life's work. The care of children is their calling. Yet, morale is low because what they hear out of Albany is a resounding chant of "schools are failing," "teachers are failing," and threats to bust up "one of the only remaining public monopolies."

After the end of World War II, President Eisenhower warned Congress about the "military industrial complex," or the relationships which exist between legislators, the armed forces and the arms industry that supports them. He was concerned that privatization of the military would lead to an ever increasing arms race which would threaten the peace and sanctity of our world. He said, "The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist." We are now in the midst of an Educational Industrial Complex, where legislators, testing companies and schools are becoming linked in an unprecedented way. It seems as though we are testing our students more and with a greater cost than ever before.

We have serious misgivings about the New York State Testing Program. In a time when creative thinking and problem solving are most important, the Governor's "reform" agenda would place an even higher emphasis on test scores in order to evaluate teachers. Even if we were satisfied that the numbers and cut scores distributed by NYSED were valid and **transparent**, the ultimate result would be that, in order to be rated as "effective" or "highly effective" teachers will teach to the test.

As educators, we know that each child has different learning styles and learns at his or her own pace. We believe that it is a teacher's obligation to differentiate instruction for students and we have provided extensive professional development to support this goal. However, New York State has proposed a "one size fits all" plan for public education without consideration of a district's performance level, poverty level, percentage of students with disabilities, etc.

For example, one of our schools has been designated a LAP school because of the gap in performance between the special education and general education population, when, in fact, this was due to significant **improvements** in the general education population in combination with more severely disabled students entering our schools. This methodology does not make sense for districts that are performing well.

We urge you to listen before it is too late. We want high performing teachers and high achieving students. We can always do better, but let's celebrate the things we do right. Long Island schools are among the best in the nation. We've gotten there by hard work, dedication and commitment to our students. No test can measure that.

As you deliberate over education reforms, we urge you to take the time that is necessary to do it the right way, not the easy way. Teacher evaluations must be fair and based on sound pedagogy, and not solely based on one or two tests taken by children. Call for an independent commission that will study this issue over the next year. That commission should be comprised of people from the field, from districts that are big, small, wealthy, needy, rural, suburban and urban. Schools want good teachers and a rigorous curriculum. We want our Levittown children to be the best. Don't you?

Sincerely,

Tonie McDonald

Tonie McDonald, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools