

## VC ECHOES

Volume 16, Issue 1

Valley Central Teachers' Association

October 2013

### NYS CARVING OUR TOMBSTONE?



VC IS A SHADOW OF ITS FORMER SELF  
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## Valley Central Teachers' Association

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Volume 16, Issue 1  
October 2013

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**15 November 2013**

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*The VC Echoes is the official publication of the Valley Central Teachers' Association—Local 3076—and is published regularly during the school year. Any articles submitted to the VC Echoes will also be posted on the VCTA web site.*

## Iannuzzi on Cuomo's Tax Commission

ALBANY, N.Y. Oct. 2, 2013 — New York State United Teachers President Richard C. Iannuzzi today released the following statement on Gov. Andrew Cuomo's appointment of a Tax Relief Commission:

"NYSUT welcomes the new Tax Relief Commission and looks forward to its collaboration with the Tax Reform and Fairness Commission. I am confident that an unbiased and comprehensive review of the state's taxation policy will lead to a fuller understanding of the unfair tax burden placed on the shrinking middle class in New York state, and a realization that a significantly more progressive income tax and less-destructive property tax cap are key factors in achieving wide-scale economic growth. Wealth inequality and income inequality must be addressed by government action if we are to reach the shared prosperity all New Yorkers deserve."

—Taken from nysut.org

## **Dignity vs. Integrity: Tim Brown**

**W**elcome back to what I hope will be a less stressful school year. We have certainly experienced some very challenging years in education lately. To be blunt, there are those who are working diligently to strip public employees, particularly education employees, of their dignity via the blame game. State and Federal school funding has been cut. Valley Central has lost millions of dollars due to gap elimination alone. Governor Cuomo appears to be the biggest political bully NYS has experienced in decades and seems to have a personal vendetta against public schools and their employees. I caution you, however, that the governor could never get away with his bullying and scapegoating tactics without 50% approval from the senate and 50% approval from the assembly. So either 50% of both the senate and assembly agree with the governor or they need to grow a set—and by that I mean develop a backbone.

Commissioner King has recently admitted that his greatly anticipated ELA and Math assessments were flawed and that districts should not punish teachers for these flawed assessments. Have no fear, King has been fired for being ineffective on paper—poor guy failed his APPR. Unfortunately, the truth is that King has decided that a 70% failure rate across the state necessitates the creation of a new scoring baseline. This smells an awful lot like a Commissioner Mills' trick (i.e. manipulate the data to its lowest possible benchmark to ensure progressive improvements on paper in future years). Commissioner King will be a genius—on paper... which is, of course, his only real work experience in education. In addition to attacks and/or a lack of support from federal, state and SED sources, there has been some scapegoating from some local constituents as well—generally for decisions that were not ours to make.

The various means by which we have been portrayed in undignified ways is often out of our immediate control. Unfortunately, we cannot effectively control what crazy, angry or misin-

formed people say. Dirty politics and politically motivated education policies are now the norm. The bully and blame game is as old as politics and education is not exempt from this game as demonstrated by the manipulation of test scores, dropout rates and graduation rates.

There is, however, a silver lining to this negative message: They cannot strip us of our integrity. While others play politics with education, we continue to teach and advocate for our students. Despite increasing demands and the loss of 107 teacher unit positions since 2008, VCTA members continue to work hard and encourage students. Enemies of public education and public employees fail to recognize the importance of integrity—probably because integrity is a foreign concept to them. In the end our integrity will win the day for our students and, therefore, for us.

Our opponents can strip us of our dignity with attacks in the press and with policies and mandates that ensure failure on paper and hurt our students. Our integrity, however, is ours to hold on to. No one can take it from us without our consent.

We will pull together as a local educational institution to protect and heal our important part of the world. We must attempt to set aside the frustration of the past few years and look forward with a positive and hopeful outlook if we are to survive these attacks. But I wish to caution each of you: Maintaining our integrity does not necessitate being a doormat—it necessitates doing what is right and fair for all and we will respond assertively to those who would scapegoat us for their failures and their mistakes.

Have a great year and be supportive of one another!

—Tim Brown, Pres. VCTA

## **Opening Day: Mike Bellarosa's Speech**

**W**elcome back everyone. You all look great. I guess that's the one advantage of not being able to hire any young teachers - None of us look any older. We all know of the importance of positive thinking and positive energy and also of how detrimental the opposite can be. For example, when we look at a calendar during the school year and discover that a three day weekend is coming up the reaction is anything but negative. Not only is there an extra day to look forward to but there is the promise of a short week to follow. Our heads are filled with possibilities. Imagine how much we can do with just one extra day! Now compare that mindset with the day we flip the calendar from July to August each summer. You know the feeling - tightness in the chest, shortness of breath, throat closes a little, followed by feelings of depression. Its understandable. Only 4 or 5 weeks left of summer after 4 or 5 weeks off is just not enough time left to do everything that needs to be done.

We are all aware of the lesson of the half full vs half empty glass - especially after a summer of many empty glasses - and we have been hearing that Governor Cuomo and Commissioner King both declare that they are succeeding in building a world class education system in NY State, even though the evidence shows the opposite. There has always been a fine line between positive thinking and selling used cars. But as we begin a year with half day only kindergarten, no elementary art music or library, no modified sports, or extra curricular activities, and numerous other cuts, I was struggling to come up with something positive to say until I realized that ....tomorrow is the first day of school. And by my calculation that means that we work one day, and then take Thursday off. Then we work a second day on Friday and rest for two more days. I didn't look into the second week but I am thinking positively - so if the rest of the year follows that same pattern, we are in for a 2013-14 school year that promises to be filled with a lot of positive attitude!

I am sure that everyone knows the story of "The Little Dutch Boy Who Saved His Country". There are about 900 versions of the story but here is the one I know and I am pretty sure that this is the way it really happened.

So a long time ago a little Dutch kid was on his way to school. He had to walk because of budget cuts. Fortunately for Holland, he knew a shortcut that took him past the huge dam that prevented the sea from flooding the entire country. He noticed a small leak in the dam and because he was educated under the Common Core Initiative and had already begun to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century problem solving skills, thinking quickly, he struck his finger in the hole and the water stopped immediately! He stood there for a few hours, determined to stand a lifetime if needed, before the school resource officer found him and asked why he wasn't at school. The boy explained his situation and the officer immediately went to the local politicians for help. All of them agreed that this was very serious but they also realized these were rough times and it was much cheaper to have little Dutch boys take turns sticking their finger in the hole each day than pay a dam contractor to fix the problem. This worked fine until the dam sprung a second leak and now there were two dam holes to deal with.

So the local politicians realized they were in over their heads (or soon would be if they didn't do something quickly) so they called the state for help. When the state reviewed the case they replied that it was a good thing that Dutch boys have two hands and praised themselves in the media for thinking outside the box to find a solution without having to increase the budget for the dam aid. But when a third hole opened and the state politicians tried to recruit more Dutch boys, none would volunteer because they had been warned by text messages and on Facebook by the original boy that there was no pay involved and it was thankless work.

So as leaks begin to show up all over the place and even a small crack (cont'd pg 5 )

## **Opening Day: Mike Bellarosa (from page 4)**

developed somewhere around the middle of the structure, the people organized and went as a group on buses to the dam state and the dam politicians realized that it was too late to make any of the dam repairs that they should have made a long time ago. It looked like the entire county would be flooded by the sea and everything was sure to be lost. The whole situation was really one big dam mess!

But just as all seemed lost, the people came from everywhere en mass, - men, women and children of all ages some digging by hand and others with orange shovels donated from Home Depot and blue ones from Lowes. Large construction equipment was also donated by local companies and soon the people working together, each to the best of his or her ability, dug a new sea bed to drain the old one into until the dam could be repaired. The country was saved!

Now there are some who say that the meaning of this story is obvious – The little Dutch Boy is a hero who through one simple action saved his entire country from being swallowed up by the sea. Others argue that the real point of the story is that people need to address the problem not just the symptoms if they really hope to find a solution that will make a difference.

I think that although both interpretations are probably true, the really intended message is that Dutch Boys and Booster Clubs have a lot in common. Both are heroic, proactive, confident resourceful, determined, Herculean, and extremely positive forces in their communities. Both were affected by budget cuts and a lack of support from the State. And both know that despite their noble effort, it is going to take an entire community to solve a problem of this magnitude. It is well worth remembering that it is much more effective and much more realistic to find 500 people to give 100 dollars than one person to give \$50,000. The Dutch boy didn't stand anymore of a chance at holding back the sea than dedicated parent groups like ADAM or the Athletic Booster Club do for paying for our programs by fundraising drives. But we have seen

what this community is capable of achieving. Their effort is truly symbolic of the need for a united front by every stake holder in our battle to save public education. Today, more than ever, we need to stand together and unify this district, this community, and our profession.

I want to close by telling you a true story - not nearly as dramatic or as long as the Dutch boy. Back in the 1980s I approached my first boss our high school principal, Frank Tschan, as we prepared for a second budget vote to prevent going on austerity. I asked, "Mr. Tschan what will it be like if we don't have any sports or extra curricular activities this year? I can't imagine what this school would look like or what would happen." He replied as only he could do in a way that got your full attention . "Michael, Either way - September is going to come. And the kids are going to come. And when they do, we have a job to do."

I am thinking today that job isn't any less important than it was almost 30 years ago. Thank you and have a great year everyone.

—*Michael Bellarosa, Athletic Director,  
Valley Central Administrators  
Association President*



Photo Credit: [bleedingyankeeblue.blogspot.com](http://bleedingyankeeblue.blogspot.com)



## **Two of Berea's Best Receive Award of Excellence**



**T**he entire Berea Staff is beaming with pride that two of our staff members have been chosen for an Award of Excellence in School Board Services, Teaching, Administration, Support Services, and Pupil Personnel Services. Robin Scott and Katie Gusmano are among the recipients of this prestigious award.

It is with great honor that I congratulate Mrs. Robin Scott for receiving the Award of Excellence in Teaching. I have been a colleague of Robin's for many years, but for the past three years I have had the pleasure of teaching the same grade level as her. Robin has so many qualities that attribute to her excellence in teaching. I often marvel at her dedication to our school, her colleagues, and most importantly her students.

Robin is involved in almost every building level committee, serves as a VCTA building representative, while simultaneously a wife and mother of two young children, and a teacher who is dedicated to making every single one of her students successful. What is more amazing is that Robin does all of this with a skip in her step and a smile on her face. Robin is well deserving of this award. I consider myself lucky to get to work with her every day, as well as call her my friend. Congratulations Robin!

—Barbara Cook, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher

Katie Gusmano has been our Student Assistance Counselor for the past 11 years and has worked tirelessly to support the students, staff, and parents in their emotional development and journey. This recognition has been afforded because of her immeasurable support of the Berea School Community. Katie supports our students in a myriad of ways. Whether meeting with students in crisis or during the ongoing character education program she coordinates, her impact is seen in every task she undertakes. While in the classroom, she encourages students to be their "Berea Best" with lessons aimed at enhancing pro-social behaviors and character development. She is an integral part of the Berea Safety Committee, Instructional Support Team, Character Education, Celebration of Capabilities, etc.... She coordinates the Big Brother/Big Sister program as well as the Bowling for Kids' Sake Event.



What separates Katie from others in her position is her passion to her vocation and devotion to the children and families of Berea. Katie's position does not end at 3:45 or on Friday afternoon. She has been known to call parents late into the evening and on weekends to discuss parenting, behavior, monitor a child's emotional state or to provide comfort during times of trauma. She will make home visits, visit hospitals (medical and mental health), as well as attend wakes and funerals so that the child and family have the emotional support necessary to overcome a traumatic event. She will research and provide resources so that the child and family can continue to heal. This emotional support is also extended to staff.

Congratulations, Katie. You are so deserving of this honor and accolades. It is our turn to say thank-you for all that you do for Berea and Valley Central.

—Dolores O'Brien, Speech Pathologist and Delaine Charette, School Psychologist

# Attention: Due to Budget Cuts, the Light at the End of the Tunnel Has Been Turned OFF!

**W**e have begun one of the darkest of VC years and as we live with the losses of this district; it is hard not to be reminded of this scene of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. If we approach a grave and read the inscription on the headstone: would it say VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT? We are a shadow of our former self. We have sustained great casualties—100 teaching positions lost over the last four years. Look around this district and who is missing: Elementary teachers, Kindergarten teachers, Music teachers, Art Teachers, Literacy Collaborative coaches, Librarians, Modified Sports Coaches, Secretaries, Paraprofessionals and Custodians.

Who is to blame for all of this? Is it the community? The Board? The Superintendent? The State would like us all to think that...but with twenty million dollars in state aid denied to our district in four years it is clear who has wiped out the fine arts from the elementary schools. The state is the reason that there are libraries full of books, but no librarians to light the love of reading within their walls. The state is the reason that we even contemplated unthinkable cuts and then closed a school. The state is the reason why now 220 kids sit on a bus that drives past their neighborhood school taking them to a new school where they are labeled the "Maybrook" kids by default. The state has chopped our Kindergarten program in half and has taken the Paraprofessionals from those classrooms. It is without any doubt the state that has chiseled the name of our district onto that headstone.

At this point in the original Christmas Carol Scrooge is appalled and begs the spirit to undo the events of his nightmarish vision. As he promises to change his ways; he finds himself returned to the relative safety of his own bed

with the opportunity to turn around his life. Are we at that place too? We may think that this answer is totally up to the mercy of the state—but the truth is that we can raise our voice and tell the state that our district as it is now is not acceptable for our students. We must hold on to the hope that we can restore our district --- that it is not too late to turn this around for all of NY's students.

~ Patti Behr, MS  
VCTA VP

Education's Scourge, I mean,

# SCROOGE!

Will he have  
an attack of  
conscience  
in the end?

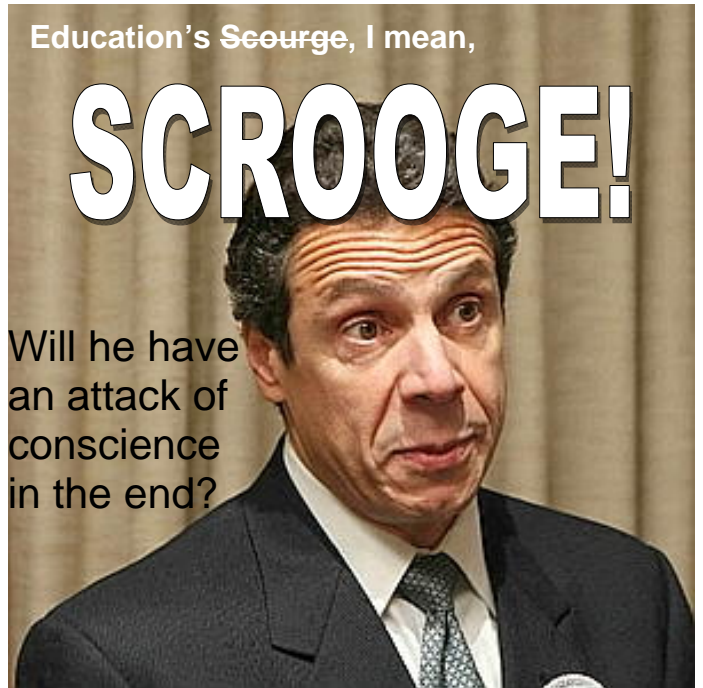


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Addition of text done by Editor.

## Common Core Plan Takes Time

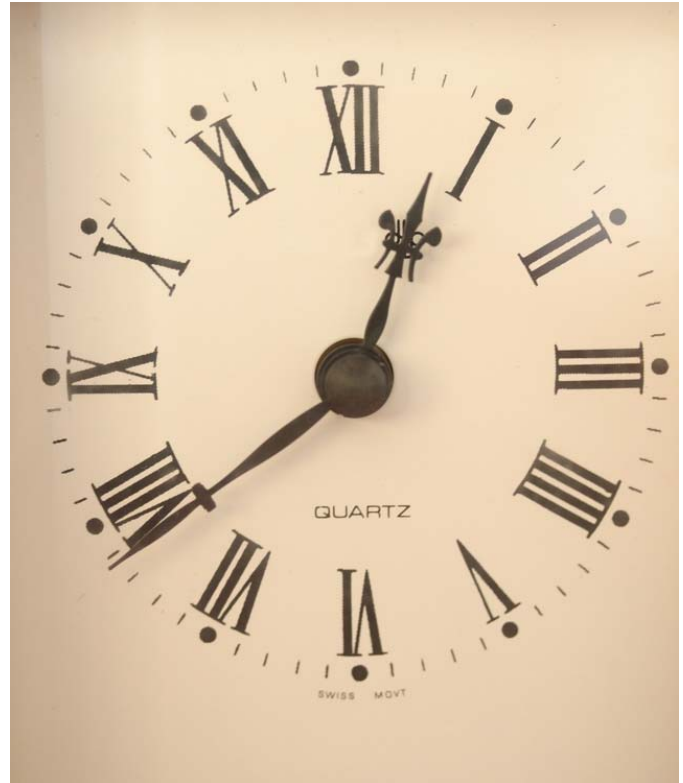
Standardized test scores being distributed to parents paint a worrisome picture. According to the state Education Department, nearly 70 percent of students are not "proficient" in English language arts and math.

There are many good reasons to dismiss these scores as meaningless, and the data produced on student growth and teacher effectiveness as useless. After all, the state required students to be tested on Common Core learning standards before teachers, in many cases, had even taught Common Core lessons. We all know most of New York's students are successful. Our public education system, despite a troubling achievement gap that must be closed, is one of the highest-achieving in the nation.

Yet, many parents reading their child's test scores are going to be alarmed and confused — and rightly so. The state is now labeling the majority of children as "failing" based on April's tests. Yet, in a decision that challenges rational thinking, the Regents voted to allow districts "flexibility" in deciding which students get extra help in their struggle toward proficiency — and which ones don't. "Flexibility" means students who need assistance won't get it, and they will fall further behind.

In its rush to carry out its "reform agenda," the state clearly miscalculated. The Regents didn't take into account the time, resources and professional development needed to fully implement the Common Core; how long it would take the system to adjust to a sea change in education policy; and the costs associated with providing the supports that students need.

Giving the system time to catch up — in a way that is sustainable — is why the state must now adopt a three-year moratorium on high-stakes consequences for students and teachers resulting from state standardized testing. The state must give teachers — and districts — more time to implement the Common Core; make necessary changes in instruction; and build stronger ladders of academic support for students who



*Take the Time to Get it Right, New York!*

need it.

Students and teachers should not be punished for the rocky implementation of the Common Core standards. If students need additional support to meet more rigorous standards, they should get it. And, while Education Commissioner John King has already declared no additional schools will be placed on "watch lists" because of last spring's tests, and no more students than before identified as "failing" because of the rushed implementation of the Common Core, this year's teacher ratings are still based on their students' lower scores. While the state has made it clear the scores represent a resetting of the bar or a new baseline — and not a step backwards — parents and teachers alike need assurance that accountability measures will be accurate, valid and reliable over time.

*(Continued on page 9)*



## **Common Core Plan Takes Time (cont'd from page 8)**

Parents and educators want a high-quality and thoughtful implementation plan. They are concerned how the state's overreliance on high-stakes testing is narrowing the curriculum and cheating students out of instruction in art, music and other subjects.

Educators are open to new standards, but changes cannot come at warp speed, before districts can adjust or budget for them. Teachers need time to 'unpack' the Common Core standards; receive appropriate professional development; and become comfortable teaching the new material. Students must adjust to higher expectations and, like teachers, should not be unfairly labeled based on questionable performance measures.

*“Educators are open to new standards, but changes cannot come at warp speed, before districts can adjust or budget for them.”*

Districts operating under the burden of an undemocratic tax cap need additional funding. All this is especially vital as the state continues to move toward Common Core tests at the high school level.

As the Regents' ill-conceived decision to allow districts to ignore student academic needs shows, many of the key prerequisites and safeguards are still missing. A three-year moratorium would give the system time to make adjustments and to finally get it right.

—Maria Neira, from  
*nysut.org*

*Neira is vice president of New York State United Teachers.*

### **Common Core Confident Webinar Series from Share My Lesson**

Share My Lesson offers a *Common Core Confident Webinar Series* from 8-9 p.m. Wednesdays, Oct. 9 – Nov. 20. A team of Common Core experts will provide tips, advice and strategies to help practitioners make the necessary adjustments to their teaching.



**FREE registration is required for each event and available on the [registration page](http://www.sharemylesson.com/webinars). For more information, visit <http://www.sharemylesson.com/webinars>.**

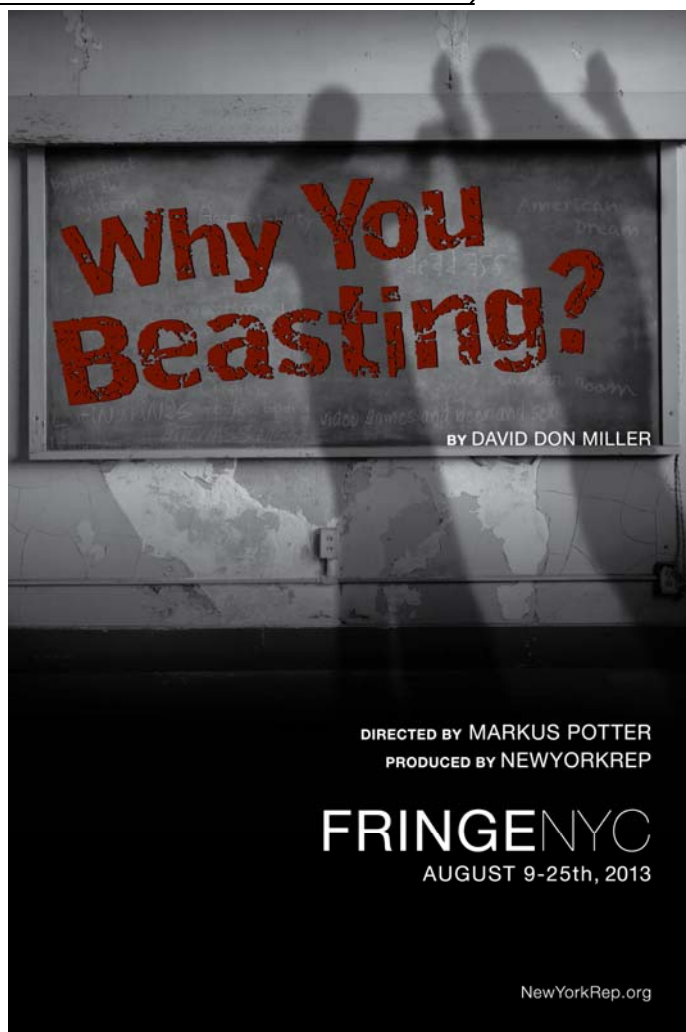
**To take advantage of Share My Lesson's entire downloadable Common Core lesson plans and online resources – for FREE – [sign up today!](#)**

## The Play's the Thing: David Don Miller

We all already know that Valley Central teachers are a rare breed. Simply the best around. What we may not know or understand about each other is that we are talented in many other areas than teaching. We have a rock star in our midst, as well as novelists, fitness and sports pros, artists, and musicians. This summer we learned that we also have a bonafide playwright among us: David Don Miller, an English teacher at the high school. The people liked his work so much that it received an encore run and many more of us were lucky enough to witness the genius of our resident bard.

Dave's play, *Why You Beasting?*, was absolutely hilarious. It chronicles the struggles of Rudy Donovan, a first-year teacher in a decidedly urban school who strives to be sent to the infamous Rubber Room as a way of surviving his job. He is eventually offered a way out: Administration. Whether you were a teacher or not, the play afforded laughs throughout. For teachers, it was belly laughs resulting in muscle pains for days afterwards, as though you had done an Insanity workout. Can anyone say, "Do now?"

While it was undoubtedly funny, it was also unsettling and thought-provoking on another level. For one, you recognized your own colleagues in the characters whether you ever worked in the City or not. The struggles always associated with the urban setting are not alien to those of us out in the sticks. You also recognized some of your students and the issues that they face every day in the behaviors and situations depicted on stage. You see that the problems that administrators face serve only to move them further and further away from the classrooms that they oversee. It makes you appreciate the



administrators who truly remember what it's like to be in a classroom. Perhaps most unsettling of all is the fact that no answers are provided. The answer that this young teacher comes to is the Rubber Room.

*Why You Beasting?* never intended to answer its own questions, but merely wanted to provoke thought. It did so, powerfully and with hearty laughter. It is a rare gift indeed and we are proud of Valley Central's own David Don Miller! Congratulations, Dave!

—Meghan Rilley, HS, Soc. St.

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## **The Commish Has Left the Building**

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I realize that I have been a vocal opponent of Commissioner King (who spelled Commissioner wrong in his own e-mail, arrrggghh) for the past few years. His “implementation” methods for the Common Core State Standards and APPR have felt more like a nonstop assault on students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Groups who are among, I might add, the most important stakeholders in education. You might be sick of me pointing out his ineptitude to you, but he has provided a fresh and most offensive yet reason for me to do so.

Commissioner King committed to answering parents’ questions at five NYS Parent Teacher Association town hall style meetings throughout the state this fall. The goal of the PTA’s forums was to allow parents to question the Commissioner directly about the Common Core Standards and the new curriculum modules being used with their children. The PTA was trying to provide a valuable opportunity to parents.

The first of five meetings was held on 10 October in the Hudson Valley at Spackenkill High School. The meeting consisted of Commissioner King speaking to the crowd for over one hour and forty minutes. The public was given twenty-three minutes to speak before the meeting ended. When public participants stood up to speak, Dr. King tried to interject with his responses. He was subsequently silenced by the crowd who were understandably furious at having sat waiting for a turn to speak and having him try to monopolize the time. The public participation portion of the meeting was taped and is easy to find on YouTube. You can watch it and make your own judgments about the crowd.

The next day, Commissioner King announced that the remaining four forums were cancelled and would not be rescheduled. The PTA later stated that it, too, supported the cancellations based on the meeting. King’s statement said, “disruptions caused by the special interests have deprived parents of the opportunity to listen, ask questions and offer comments...Essentially, dialogue has been denied.”

My first question is “since when are parents considered a special interest group, Mr. Commissioner?” Parents are the ones who actually hold the power in this situation and I pray to God they soon realize it. Additionally, parents have every right to question and/or make their views known about a public policy to the public official in charge. It is a right protected and guaranteed by our national and our state constitutions. While I disagree with the cursing directed at King and questioning him about his children’s schooling, it doesn’t mean that the peoples’ right to express themselves is null and void. In the words of Voltaire, “I do not agree with what you have to say, but I’ll defend to the death your right to say it.” If you are a public official holding a public forum, you have to listen to the public and not cancel these forums for all when you don’t like what you are hearing. Calling parents a “special interest group” is offensive and petty. After having watched the video I feel that several of the speakers must have been teachers. I can only assume that this is what the Commissioner means when he claims the meeting was hijacked by “special interests.” Well, teachers are frequently parents, too, Doc! *Cont’d pg 12)*

## **The Commish Has Left the Building(from 11)**

Should the fact that a man or woman is a teacher stop him/her from speaking about an issue which impacts their child(ren)? From asking a question or providing feedback to the public official who is in a position to effect change in the policy? There are many sacrifices teachers must make in the name of the profession, but protecting and advocating for their own children is certainly not among them.

My next question for the King is “How did your one hour and forty minute rationale for the common core promote essential dialogue between you and your audience?” Imagine sitting in a meeting where you are already frustrated, looking for answers, a meeting which you are told will provide an opportunity for you to ask your questions and make your comments. Now picture sitting and listening to a sales pitch for the very thing that has you frustrated for almost two hours. Are you getting happier over the elapsed period of time? Are you meditating and finding your inner Zen peace? Hell no. You are getting madder with each and every word. You are getting more and more frustrated and less interested in what the speaker has to say, let alone maintaining proper decorum. Then the first public participant stands up, makes her comments and the first thing the speaker wants to do is monopolize more of the valuable time you have to say what you came to say.

It isn't difficult to see why these parents (even if some might have been teachers, too, what a crime!) would get frustrated and even become unruly. The Commissioner himself was not interested in a dialogue, but a dictation followed by defense of his policy. It is clear in watching the video. He tries to interject his rationalizations after many speakers, until he is booed into sub-

mission. How do his actions show a desire for constructive and necessary dialogue? To the parents in the room that night, Dr. King did anything but. How can you then lament the lack of dialogue and blame it on the crowd? You have to be the Commissioner.

The Common Core is not a bad set of standards. In fact, it is quite excellent. For teachers to be saying four years after it was announced that they still require more professional development is embarrassing. Many of the commenting participants at the meeting cited lack of teacher training as a major failure. Frankly, that does hardworking, dedicated teachers a disservice. We can handle our jobs. To be portrayed in this light is frustrating and actually feeds into King and Cuomo's criticisms and disdain for public educators. I hope that it is not teachers who made those comments at the forum.

Dr. King himself is hurting the Common Core movement more than anything else. The curriculum modules NYSED released are, in the elementary grades particularly, not realistic or aligned to child development. The fact that districts are forcing their teachers to use these modules is the problem here. Dr. King was going to state that the modules are only guidelines, not mandatory to follow. That would have been one valid point that should see the light of day. Teachers can address the standards by creating their own materials and aligning them to the standards if districts give them the power to do so. Dr. King has now alienated parents potentially to the point of no return. He has long since done this with teachers. As an elected official, he needs to start building rather than incinerating bridges. —*Meghan Riley, HS*



## The King's Dictionary:

New York – The reigning Commissioner of Education for the State of New York, John King, has released the following dictionary of terms that he would like distributed at any other town hall meetings he deigns to attend.

- **accountability** — fireability, what the King is above
- **child** — learning unit available for sale to corporations (notable exceptions include: King's child(ren))
- **critical voices** — that to which the King is deaf
- **democracy** — a form of government in which people choose their leaders and their leaders choose not to listen to them because it is time-consuming and inconvenient
- **dissent** — that to which the King is impervious
- **education** — marketplace
- **educators** — pawns
- **experience** — overblown requirement for teaching
- **evidence** — that which does not exist to support the use of Common Core Standards
- **knowledge** — facts, information and skills not necessarily required before implementing state-wide learning standards
- **money** — short cut around democratic process
- **parent** — easily manipulated adult unit in charge of child (see above)
- **Ravitch** — she who must not be named
- **respect** — what silent acquiescence shows
- **rigor** — developmentally inappropriate
- **schooled** — what the King got on October 10, 2013 in Poughkeepsie, NY
- **special interests** — those who disagree with the King's policies
- **Town Hall meeting** — gathering at which the King speaks and you listen

This is from:

<http://studentslast.blogspot.com/2013/10/the-kings-dictionary.html>



## **NYSUT, AQE to Host New Forums for Parents**

**A**LBANY, N.Y. October 17, 2013 - New York State United Teachers and the Alliance for Quality Education announced today that they will host a series of forums for parents and educators to fill the void caused by the cancellations of PTA-sponsored forums by state Education Commissioner John B. King Jr.

The forums, to be held in the Capital Region, Long Island, Syracuse and Western New York, will enable parents and educators to share their solutions for addressing the problems caused by the state's rushed implementation of the Regents' Reform agenda at a time when schools have been forced to make significant cuts to curriculum, programs and services.

"These forums will allow the voices of parents and educators to be heard," said NYSUT President Richard C. Iannuzzi. "The advancement of higher standards and student learning has been jeopardized by SED's rush to administer tests before the lessons in the new standards were learned. Parents and educators have commonsense solutions for the course corrections needed by the state, and these forums will ensure they have a chance to share their experience and expertise."

"Parents and educators need to be heard, not silenced," said Billy Easton, Executive Director, Alliance for Quality Education. "These forums will provide that opportunity. New York State has shifted away from a focus on teaching and learning and onto being overly focused on testing. The promise of the Common Core was that it would raise the quality of the curriculum for every student, but the state has focused on more and harder testing while cutting the quality of the curriculum by starving our schools."

"We think it's essential to encourage conversations among the stakeholders about the state's obsessive testing – and what's needed to get this right," Iannuzzi said.

NYSUT is calling for a three-year moratorium on high-stakes consequences for students and teachers resulting from the state's standardized tests to ensure that our schools have the time and supports needed to fix the deficiencies in SED's implementation.

Unlike other hearings and forums organized by others, NYSUT and AQE said the forums will be held in the evenings to make it as easy as possible for parents and educators to participate, and the focus will be on listening to their solutions. Locations and dates will be announced shortly.

NYSUT, the state's largest union, represents more than 600,000 teachers, school-related professionals, academic and professional faculty in higher education, professionals in education and health care and retirees. NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.

—Taken From [nysut.org](http://nysut.org)



## See a Bully, Stop a Bully!: Every Month

October is National Bullying Prevention Month, and NYSUT and its national affiliates — the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association — have made available an array of online resources to raise awareness about this important issue and to provide valuable tools for educators, students and parents.

NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Lee Cutler, who heads the union's social justice efforts, has led a number of workshops and meetings across the state detailing how bullying — which can be physical, verbal or cyber — can negatively impact children's self-image and have lasting effects well into adulthood. Nearly one-third of students have reported being bullied; that number increases significantly when online bullying is factored in.

Research shows that the victims of bullies are more likely than their peers to drop out of school or to be absent from school. Research also shows that children who are bullies are apt to be bullies as adults and are potential abusers of children and spouses.

The union resources include posters, videos, stickers and other materials with an anti-bullying message. NYSUT members are encouraged to download the materials they find most useful for their classroom or to share them with parents and interested community members.

— Taken From *nysut.org*,

Access resources on *nysut.org*



### What to Look For and How to Help:

**Children at Risk:** They are perceived as being different from their peers, such as being overweight or underweight, tall or short, wearing glasses or different clothing, being the new kid at the school, different sexual orientations, parents can't afford things that are "cool," kids that are perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves, are less popular or have few friends.

**Warning Signs:** Child doesn't want to go to school; has frequent stomachaches or headaches; exhibits lower self-esteem or depression; becomes non-social; has increased feelings of sadness or loneliness, has difficulty sleeping or has nightmares, there's a change in eating patterns, poor grades, or loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy. Be alert for unexplainable injuries, lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics or jewelry, sudden loss of friends. Take action if there are any self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, skipping school, harming themselves or talking about suicide.

**Support:** Never tell the child to ignore the bullying. Do not blame the child for being bullied. Do not tell the child to physically fight back, as that could result in the child getting hurt, suspended or expelled. Allow the school or other officials to act as mediators between parents.

—From *nysut.org*

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**Amendments were made to the Dignity  
For All Students Act (DASA) effective  
July 2013. Review them at:  
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/dignityact/>**