

Buffalo Forum



Local Publication of the
U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

Workers of all countries, unite!

IN THIS ISSUE:

- **Anti-War Actions** I
- **All U.S. Troops Home Now** I-5
- **Buffalo: Our Schools, We Decide** 6-10
- **Lawrence Receivership Example** II
- **Refuse the State Tests** 12-15
- **Newark Student Union Sit-In** 16

February 20, 2015

Vol. 19 #2

NO AUTHORIZATION FOR MORE WAR CRIMES

All U.S. Troops Home Now

On February 11, President Obama sent a resolution to Congress asking for an Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) to “degrade and destroy” ISIS and any “associated persons or forces” anywhere in the world, including potentially the U.S. As Obama brought out in

his comments requesting the AUMF, he has long been waging illegal war. He said, “More than 2,000 coalition airstrikes have pounded these terrorists. We’re disrupting their command and control and supply lines, making it harder for them to move.

All U.S. Troops Home Now • 3

Obama to Congress: Rubber-Stamp My Perpetual War

Marjorie Cohn, Truthout

Obama has launched 2,300 airstrikes in Iraq and Syria since August 8, 2014. In his six years as president, he has killed more people than died on 9/11 with drones and other forms of targeted killing in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia - countries with which the United States is not at war.

Perpetual War • 5

JOIN THE ACTIONS MARCH 18-21

An Anti-War Intervention in DC

*Cindy Sheehan’s Soapbox
People’s Network*

“Spring Rising” is four days of creative resistance; theater, teach-ins; rallies and marches marking the anniversary of the United States’ “shock and awe” attack on Iraq and its invasion and occupation in a completely illegitimate, immoral war.

Join Anti-War Actions • 4

CUOMO’S EFFORT TO BLOCK PUBLIC CONTROL

State Receivership of Public Schools Is No Solution

Governor Cuomo has called for the use of state receivership over entire school districts in the state. He has named Buffalo as a main, and perhaps the first target for such receivership. In his state of the state Cuomo put it this way: “When a school fails for three years, a nonprofit, another school district, or a turnaround expert must take over the school. That

entity will have the authority to: Overhaul the curriculum; Override agreements to terminate under-performing staff; Provide salary incentives to recruit high-performing educators; Obtain priority over Pre-K, extended learning time, community schools, Early College High Schools, and other State grant programs.”

Receivership No Solution • 10

WHO DECIDES? WE DECIDE!

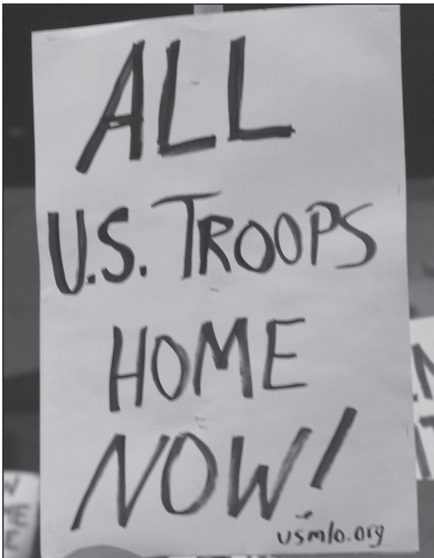
Our Schools Require Public Control

Governor Cuomo is threatening Buffalo Public Schools with a state takeover and appointment of a single individual with power to decide all matters of education. This is supposed to raise the quality of public education, even though it eliminates the most important ingredient for doing so — direct and full involvement and decision making by

teachers, staff, students and parents.

It is not a coincidence that right at the time when teachers, staff, students, parents, alumni and community organizers are all active and mobilized to keep schools open, public and raise their quality, Cuomo is acting to throw that most valuable ingredient away.

Public Control • 6



Support the Building of the Communist Press!

Subscribe to VOICE OF REVOLUTION

The national paper of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization. VOR works to raise the level of political discussion in society by taking stands that provide a way forward, oppose the chauvinism and racism of the U.S. state, and advance the interests of the working class and people. VOR also reports on the organizing work to build the alternative by Creating Politics of Empowerment. Together It Can Be Done! Read, write and distribute VOR.

office@usmlo.org
www.usmlo.org

Buffalo Forum

The local edition. Send us your views, comments, letters, and reports on activities. *Buffalo Forum* will respond to all serious letters to further develop political discussion with its readers. We want to know what you think!

716-602-8077
buffaloforum@usmlo.org
usmlo.org/buffaloforum

***Join in this
Vital Work!
Help Build the
Discussion!***

Subscriptions:

One year: \$65
Sustainer levels start at \$100
(Monthly payment plans available from your distributor.)

**Send check or money
order payable to:
USMLO, P.O. Box 331
Buffalo, NY 14209**

UPCOMING EVENTS

#STOLENLIVES: HONORING YOUNG VICTIMS OF RACIST STATE VIOLENCE

February 22, 2:30- 4:30pm

El Buen Amigo, 114 Elmwood Ave

Join us to honor #AiyanaJones & the scores of young black people whose lives have been cut short by state violence, murder & mass incarceration. This weekend is notably a time to also mark the assassination of Malcolm X, on February 21, 1965. We will also uplift the lives of local racist police state victims, including former Black Panther and political prisoner Jalil Muntaqim, imprisoned at age 18, and entering his 44th year imprisonment at Attica. Special guest speaker: Buffalo's own John Walker, falsely convicted as a teenager and only recently released, another young black life stolen by the racist police state.

Music by Ismail & Company

Sponsored by the Buffalo Anti-Racism Coalition

BUFFALO SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

February 25, 5:30pm, City Hall, Room 801

**Carry Forward the Fight for Public Control of Public Schools
Stand Together and Speak Out at the Board Meeting**

CALLING PARENTS, EDUCATORS, LEGISLATORS AND ALL WHO CARE ABOUT PUBLIC EDUCATION! COME STAND UP TO CUOMO

February 26, 6:00 - 7:30pm

West Seneca West Senior High School

Stand up to:

Cuomo's threat to hold school funds hostage
Cuomo's push to weaken local control of schools
School-bashing and teacher-bashing!

Come to:

Give Cuomo His Own APPR!
Put Cuomo on an Improvement Plan!
Vote to Take Action in Your Community to Save Public Education!

BUFFALO PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION MONTHLY MEETING

February 28, 8:30-11am

East High School, 820 Northampton

8:30: Registration and Breakfast

9-11: Meeting

I • ALL U.S. TROOPS HOME NOW

We're destroying their fighting positions, their tanks, their vehicles, their barracks, their training camps, and the oil and gas facilities and infrastructure that fund their operations. We're taking out their commanders, their fighters, and their leaders."

His AUMF calls for use of Special Forces wherever Obama deems it necessary. As he said, "If we had actionable intelligence about a gathering of ISIL leaders, and our partners didn't have the capacity to get them, I would be prepared to order our Special Forces to take action." There are no geographic limitations and the request for the AUMF is in part an effort to make these crimes of aggression "legal." Getting Congress to agree to war crimes, as it did in 2001 authorizing aggression and war against Afghanistan and again in 2002 against Iraq, does not make them just or legal. It just makes Congress complicit in the crimes.

Further, it is the duty of Congress to declare war. This maneuver of no declaration of war but instead a vague AUMF that can be applied anywhere in the world against anyone the president declares is ISIS or "associated" with ISIS or any "closely-related successor entity" is also used as an attempt to exempt the U.S. from the laws of war, including the crimes of massacring civilians, destroying civilian infrastructure, torture, and

aggression. It is also a means for "authorizing" wars already being waged by the president, when Congress should be using its authority to end them.

Obama's proposal would repeal the 2002 authorization that paved the way for the war in Iraq. But it would leave in place the broader September 2001 authorization for use of military force that sanctioned the illegal invasion of Afghanistan and collective punishment against her people, in the name of the September 11 attacks. That is the AUMF Obama is using to justify all his current actions. His request for yet another AUMF serves mainly to broaden the geographic scope for use of force, particularly use of drones and other airstrikes and Special Forces. It is also an effort to make Congress appear functional on the world stage in a situation where it clearly is not. Indeed, Obama's



action may in part be an effort to isolate what will be called "extremists" on the "left" and "right" within Congress who object to the AUMF, while securing its passage.

The U.S. war of terror has shown itself to be no solution to the problems of terrorism and certainly has not contributed to the cause of peace and security, abroad or at home. Obama's drone warfare and readiness to take unilateral action and use force has unleashed broad chaos and violence and created grave dangers. The answer is not authorization for yet more crimes and more violence against the peoples. What is needed is advancing the fight to bring *All U.S. Troops Home Now*. Ending U.S. aggression and wars would directly contribute to peace and security. It would raise the standing of the U.S., as unlike U.S. aggression, the peoples worldwide would welcome removing all U.S. troops and bases.

Let all join in advancing this fight to bring *All U.S. Troops Home Now* as an essential contribution to peace and a step toward an anti-war government. That is what is required, not a Congress that sanctions more war crimes.



I • JOIN ANTI-WAR ACTIONS

Together we will use this time to oppose the plans and calls for growing military intervention.

As we send this invitation to you the Congress is calling for more war. The President has just told us a new global “war on terror” may be unlimited in space and time.

- Are you, like us, stunned and enraged by more war on the world?

- Did you or your organization join in the protests against police violence and murder, because Black Lives Matter?

- Are you with the Dreamers working for rights for all people to live without fear?

- Are you one of the many who have dropped everything to protest the global destruction of the environment because of our dependence on fossil fuels which is also a reason for our wars?

- Are you agonized over the ongoing U.S. military support for Israel, the recent killing of 2,000 Arab men, women, and

important for building the movement we need to oppose war and the violence and oppression of empire at home and abroad.

Here’s the schedule so far:

Wednesday March 18

Meet & Greet 5-8 pm

Plymouth United Church of Christ 5301 N. Capital Street NE

Thursday March 19

“Challenging Congress” – a morning of lobbying 9am - 1pm Meet in the Rayburn Senate Office cafeteria. Organized by Code Pink.

“People’s Uprising Tour: From Empire and War to Justice with Peace” – a bus tour organized by the Peoples’ Soapbox Network & Cindy Sheehan to visit offices of those who plan, profit from and are complicit in war crimes of empire. Meet 1pm at U.S. Capitol.

Teach-In Part One: “U.S. Military Aggression – A Key Part of Global Ecological Destruction”; with presentations by members of the Veterans for Peace Advisory Board including Marjorie Cohn, Ray McGovern and Matthew Hoh. Location TBA

Friday March 20

Friday morning will be devoted to the creation/assembly of signs, banners, puppets or other visual displays for the rally and march the next day. Please bring your own materials; a limited number of blank, white poster boards and

markers will be available.

Teach-In Part Two, 3 – 10pm,

University of the District of Columbia Law School, 4200 Connecticut Avenue Northwest

“What are the connections and challenges for those working to stop targeted killing by the U.S. and those working to stop killing with impunity by U.S. police?”

A discussion by Veterans for Peace and Military Families Speak Out.



World Beyond War: An Alternative Global Security System. Speakers: David Swanson, Leah Bolger, Matthew Hoh

“U.S. Wars of Aggression and Islamic Jihad: What is the Bigger Danger, and How Should the Anti-war Movement Respond?”

Saturday March 21

The morning will be devoted to last-minute work on signs and creative displays.

Noon Rally at Lafayette Park in front of the White House

1pm March from the White House, through Chinatown to the Capitol

Spring Rising will comprise a number of events including a large rally and march, a teach-in, and lobbying. Its goal is to increase opposition to wars and militarism, and in particular to U.S. military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, as well as all U.S. drone attacks and surveillance worldwide. Spring Rising advocates the closure of U.S. military bases overseas, and the dismantling of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. We urge the demilitarization of police forces and a halt to their targeting of minority communities. We seek to increase understanding of and resistance to U.S. military operations’ acceleration of climate chaos.



children last summer in Gaza?

- Are you furious about the killing and terrorizing of Muslims in the U.S?

Then, join us! Your participation in Spring Rising is urgently needed now to organize protests, participate in teach-ins and to put your art and performance on mass display. Together we can create the vibrant resistance needed to show that terrorizing the world is not in our interest and “not in our name.”

These days together will be vitally

I • PERPETUAL WAR

President Obama's proposed Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) seeks retroactive congressional approval for wars he has been conducting for six months. Even if Congress does not oblige him, Obama will continue to bomb Iraq and Syria, falsely claiming that the 2001 AUMF gives him that authority.

As President Barack Obama presented his proposed Authorization for Use of Military Force to Congress, he declared, "I do not believe America's interests are served by endless war, or by remaining on a perpetual war footing." Yet Obama's proposal asks Congress to rubber-stamp his endless war against anyone he wants, wherever he wants. Obama's proposed AUMF contains some purported limitations, but their vagueness amounts to a blank check to use U.S. military force in perpetuity.

"Associated Persons or Forces"

The president's proposal authorizes force against the Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL) and its "associated persons or forces." They are defined as "individuals and organizations fighting for, on behalf of, or alongside ISIL or any closely-related successor entity in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners."

This proviso contains no geographical limitation. It would authorize the use of military force anywhere in the world. "[T]he executive branch could interpret this language to authorize force against individuals far from any battlefield with only some remote connection to the group — potentially even in the United States itself," according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

No "Enduring Offensive Operations"

Obama's AUMF "does not authorize the use of the United States Armed Forces in enduring offensive ground combat operations." This provision contains no definition of "enduring." Does this mean one month? One year? Three Years? [...] Under Obama's AUMF, the United States could deploy thousands of US troops and call it a defensive operation.

This provision is riddled with exceptions. The 3,000 U.S. military personnel currently in Iraq are exempted from the limitation.

So are special operations forces, as well as those collecting intelligence, involved with "kinetic strikes, or the provision of operation planning and other forms of advice and assistance to partner forces." [...]

Nor is the term "offensive" defined in the proposal. By labeling operations defensive, Obama or his successor could use increasing numbers of ground troops. [...]

2001 AUMF Still in Force

The three-year sunset provision in Obama's proposal is rendered meaningless by the continued existence of the AUMF Congress gave President George W. Bush in 2001. Obama claims he already has authority to wage his wars under the 2001 AUMF, which authorizes the president to use "force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons."

But the 2001 AUMF's license is limited to those connected with the 9/11 attacks. In fact, when Bush asked for authority "to deter and preempt any future acts of terrorism or aggression against the United States," Congress refused. Yet Obama has used the 2001 AUMF to justify his ongoing drone wars and his invasion of Iraq and Syria, in spite of the absence of any connection with the 9/11 attacks.

Without repealing the 2001 AUMF, "any sunset of the new authorization will be ineffectual, since the next president can claim continued reliance on the old one," according to Rep. Adam Schiff (D-California). On February 13, 2015, a group of Democratic senators introduced a bill to repeal the 2001 AUMF in three years. [...]

Bipartisan Opposition to Obama's Proposed AUMF

Some Democrats think Obama's proposed AUMF is too broad. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-California) wrote in *The Huffington Post* that the language prohibiting "enduring offensive ground combat operations" is "vague, overly broad and confusing."

Many Republicans think Obama's proposal constrains his ability to use US ground troops against ISIS. Ironically, the GOP, which consistently seeks to reign in

Obama's authority, wants to grant the president more power to use military force.

It is likely that Congress will ultimately agree on a reworded AUMF to give Obama congressional cover to pursue his wars.

Violation of UN Charter

But even if Congress were to authorize Obama's wars in Iraq and Syria, those wars would still violate the UN Charter. The charter requires all states to settle their disputes peacefully, and to refrain from the use of armed force except when acting in self-defense or with the blessing of the Security Council.

The Syrian government has not consented to Obama's bombing in Syria. And although the Iraqi government has blessed Obama's bombing campaign, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi "is a puppet government that Obama installed and therefore has no authority under international law to consent to U.S. military operations in Iraq," according to law professor Francis Boyle. "It is like in Vietnam when we had our puppets there asking us to conduct military operations there." [...]

Pursue Diplomacy, Not Permanent War

Obama's drone strikes have killed large numbers of civilians; only 2 percent of those killed have been high-level al-Qaeda or Taliban leaders. They have also created increased resentment against the United States. [...]

We need to stop using military force as a solution to everything — indeed, it is a solution to nothing. We must focus on diplomacy. [...]

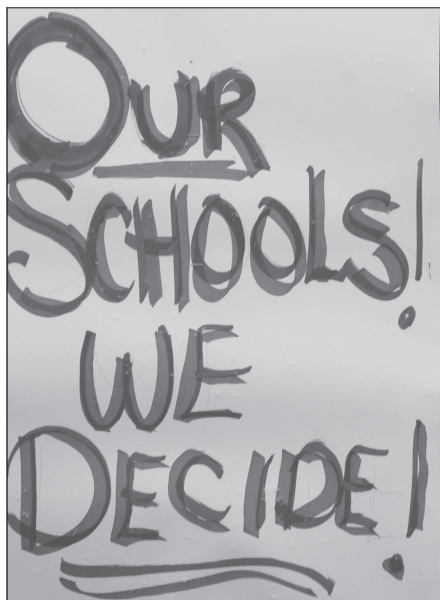
We must also push for the repeal of the 2001 AUMF and prevent the passage of a new AUMF.

We cannot rely on Congress or the president to reverse the course of rampant U.S. militarism. It is up to us to make our voices heard. Mass opposition in the United States to Obama's proposed airstrikes on the Assad regime in 2013 was instrumental in preventing those strikes. Congress and the White House do respond to popular pressure. We must call, write, email and demonstrate, write letters to the editor and op-eds, and voice our disapproval of Obama's perpetual war.

SPEECH AT FEBRUARY 11 BOARD MEETING

Our Movement Will Not Back Down or Disappear

A Buffalo Parent, Teacher and Bennett Graduate



I am a proud Bennett graduate, parent, teacher, union member and co-chair of the Buffalo Parent-Teacher Organization (BPTO). I will not be silenced by any Board member or intimidated by any group doing the bidding of Education Reformers.

The teachers, students, parents and community members here tonight whose voices have and will soon be heard will not be silenced. They will not be intimidated.

We have formed a movement; a movement that will not back down; that will not disappear if the four redesign plans [for Bennett, East, Lafayette and MLK] are not passed.

Our movement continues to grow, which makes some folks uncomfortable, because it would be easier to dismantle our

schools without educated resistance.

The wizards behind the education reform curtain are being exposed more and more each day — and not just here in Buffalo, but across our country.

Our numbers are growing. We know the unlikely alliances of some of you in this room tonight were formed for personal benefit and not for the benefit of Buffalo and its school communities.

We have come together; parents, teachers, students and community organizations — the components needed to make schools work for all of us. We are not going anywhere. Our strength is increasing.

The people rallying outside this building a short time ago, the people sitting here right now, are united. We will not accept

Our Movement Will Not Back Down • 9

I • PUBLIC CONTROL

More than that, he is acting to block future collective action by teachers and students and the public, by eliminating their role entirely in matters of education. All are to submit and do as they are told by an appointed receiver — not accountable to the people of Buffalo and all those involved in education — but to the Governor. We say NO! These are *Our Schools, We Decide!*

Some also consider that the recent vote by the school board, which did not approve the redesign plans for Bennett, East, Lafayette and MLK, means the fight for these plans is now over. Again, we say NO! The board has presented no plans that are better and has also not specified why these plans are not what are needed. We say these plans are what is best for our schools and will continue to fight for them. We will also fight to keep all the principals and teachers who have joined in creating these plans at their respective schools to implement them. The federal and state government, and thus the board, are demanding the principals be removed, even though they are the ones more knowledgeable about the plans and what is needed for their schools. Principals are not the problem and teachers are not the

problem — lack of decision making by the public is.

The movement organized to defend the equal right to education for all and to raise the quality of our public schools by defending rights — including the right of the public to decide and control — is not going to stop now. This movement is not going to throw away the unity and passion and common consciousness achieved and expressed in the demand *Our Schools, We Decide!*

Governor Cuomo and a vote by the board do not decide the fate of our schools. Our continued fight for rights does. Our refusal to submit does. Our increased organizing, broadening our efforts to more schools, involving more students, does. *We Decide!*

Moving forward requires stepping up our fight. Specifically this means:

1) Continuing to fight for the redesign plans and refusing to allow Bennett or any of the four schools to be sidelined by the board vote. The redesign plans are valid, important and all involved need to continue to fight for them at board meetings and through other means

2) Continuing to use the board meetings

as a space for the public to express its stand and unify and inspire people, including continued calls to the board to defend our rights and oppose Cuomo's undemocratic and anti-education plans. Receivership means there may not be a board by 2016 so the board should at least stand up for its own right to govern and join us in standing for public control. ***All Out to the February 25 Board meeting, 5:30 at City Hall and March 11, 5:30 at Waterfront***

3) Joining with parents and involving more students in efforts to Refuse the State Tests coming up in April. The state Common Core testing regime is a main weapon used to brand students, teachers and schools as failing and force them to close. It has not contributed to raising the quality of schools while it has served to open the way for privatization and now possibly state receivership. Organizing to refuse the tests is another way to block efforts to wreck our schools while building up the ability of students to take actions on test days to *Refuse the Tests!*

Now is the time to strengthen our organized efforts and make clear to Cuomo and the Board: *Our Schools, We Decide!*

PROTESTS AFFIRM PUBLIC'S STAND ON EDUCATION

Our Schools, We Decide!

Whose Schools? Our Schools! Who Decides? We Decide! rang out repeatedly inside and outside the School Board meeting February 11. The stand of the public is firm and undaunted. Decisions about education belong to the public and must be in their hands and no one else's — *We Decide!* Speakers inside and out emphasized that the broad mobilization and activation of the public that has taken place over the past several months is of great value. It is a main success of the organizing efforts to be strengthened as the struggle goes forward.

Large numbers of people again rallied outside in the snow before the board meeting started and then hundreds went inside and again filled the auditorium for the meeting. Students are increasing their role, leafleting and mobilizing in their schools and working together with teachers and organizers. This includes those in the four schools scheduled for closure — Bennett, East, Lafayette and MLK. Other students from City Honors, Riverside and elsewhere also spoke out against the attacks on the public schools and stood with their fellow students demanding the equal right to education for all.

As in the previous board meetings, those who spoke outside and inside stood firmly for a *Yes Vote on the Redesign Plans* created by the schools. They emphasized that the teachers, staff, parents, students, principals and community are mobilized and organized to support and implement these plans, and such unity and passion must not be wasted. In speeches and chants and other actions, participants affirmed they will keep up the struggle for rights, however the board votes. That is what *We Decide* means.

This active and united public has emerged despite efforts by local and state officials to divide teachers and parents, completely ignore students and tire people out. Votes have been delayed, meeting locations and times moved, and the repeated stand of the public in favor of the redesign plans and for public control of public schools ignored and openly dismissed. As

one board member put it, reflecting the actions of the majority, "Your comments mean nothing to me."

The fear by government officials of a rising public, a public that is defending its right to decide, was also evident in efforts to silence opposition — something denounced by those at the rally and board meeting. This included having a teacher at a previous board meeting escorted out simply because he was a union member. One of the speakers at the February 11 meeting addressed the fact that all these efforts to silence people are undemocratic and unacceptable. He was joined by teachers and students in the audience who used large stickers to cover their mouths in a symbolic portrayal of the unjust silencing. He ended with the wider audience standing in support and as people took off the stickers, all joined in chanting *Whose Schools? Our Schools! Who Decides? We Decide!*

People also rejected the plan to extend criterion schools, like City Honors and Performing Arts, into Bennett and MLK. Students who have experienced such co-location in New York City have brought out what a disaster such actions are, whether they involve all public schools or a combination of public and charter schools. Co-location is disruptive, increases conflicts and does not contribute to raising the quality of education. The redesign plans, and the broad and active support for them do contribute to improving education, with new ideas for curriculum, for involving students more in decision making, and for developing the schools as organizing centers, which itself improves education. The organizing efforts to gain approval for the plans are themselves an important form of education for all involved, and a positive



"project-based" model for regular use in the schools.

The practice that has been developed over the past several months for people speaking to address the audience and involve them in chants and other actions took various forms at this particular board meeting. In addition to the action opposing the silencing, another one called for "shining a light" for the board to see the just demand for a "Yes" vote on the redesign plans. The whole audience joined in standing up and waving small electric candles to light the way forward. Other actions included use of music, providing the "prize" of Bennett's redesign plan and a large number of students in attendance who wore T-shirts with printed slogans to demand "Vote Yes" for each school's redesign plan and for *Public Control of Public Schools!* What stands out is that the school board meetings are now mainly used to further unite and engage people in the struggle, rather than submit to the board majority and its anti-education plans.

Organizing efforts are going forward with enthusiasm and with the firm stand that however the board votes, and however the state tries to intervene, these are *Our Schools, We Decide!*



EDUCATION BATTLES

Measuring Our Success

As the struggle to defend the equal right to education for all goes forward, centered on the content, *Our Schools, We Decide!* it is useful to look at how to measure successes to date and their significance. A main thing that stands out is that over the past several months of organizing, the content of *Our Schools, We Decide!* has been widely demanded and repeatedly fought for. It is emerging as the unifying central demand of the public, repeatedly affirmed in chants by the entire audience at the school board meetings. And this despite efforts by the board and others to silence this stand. The consciousness has emerged that the public schools belong to the public, should stay public and that defending them and improving their quality requires **decision making by the public**. The united stand, expressed repeatedly at rallies and board meetings is *We Decide!* This is a significant success. It enables all to keep our fight in our hands and based on our demands — not the resolutions or votes by the board. It is this orientation that guides work now as the struggle goes forward. *We Decide* means *We Decide*.

Secondly, people are not willing to accept decisions by the school board that trample on the right to speak and organize. The court of public opinion has roundly rejected efforts to silence people, whether union members or community organizers or students. Use of police, refusing to allow signs inside the meetings, repeated threats to remove people, robbing people of their allotted time to speak — none of this has intimidated people.

On the contrary, tactics have emerged that put the tone and spirit of the board meetings in the hands of the public, not the board. This is evident in the T-shirts worn by more and more students, demanding *Vote YES* on the redesign plans and calling for *Public Control of Public Schools*. It is seen in the readiness of the entire audience to join in chants and use this as a method to unite and inspire the public while silencing board members. It is seen in the fact that speakers now mainly address the audience and use tactics that engage the audience, such as the more recent one using candles to “shine a light.” It is seen in the unity developed at Bennett, as one example, where 100% of teachers and staff voted for the redesign plans and students, teachers, parents, alumni and community members continue to fight for the school’s redesign plan to be implemented. These tactics and stands reflect the recognition that this is our fight, in our hands and *We Decide!* not the board.

Thirdly, attention is being paid to mobilizing more students at more schools. This is an important means to strengthen the resistance and block efforts to target and isolate teachers. It also contributes to involving more parents. And it positions students to play a role on other fronts, such as refusing the state tests coming up in April. Participation of students in the various actions has been increasing as has conscious organizing, school by school. This too is an important success.

At this time, when the board has approved a resolution concerning the four

schools, these successes also serve as a means to resist the pressure being exerted to abandon the struggle, or look at it solely from the perspective of the board. There is pressure to focus debate on whether the board listened, or to what degree they did. Our job is not to hand decision making over to the board and accept their votes, which means we do not measure success based on their actions. We measure it based on our own and what we decide is needed. While the board did vote, and we take their resolution into account and need to now analyze its content, it is we who decide. *Our Schools, We Decide!*

Our work is to further advance the unity, consciousness and organization of the public as a whole — of students, teachers, staff, parents, all concerned — with the necessity to continue the fight and strengthen our work for decision making by the public. The fight for the equal right to education for all demands public control, public decision making, not that by a few board members elected by a handful of voters. And not by state receivership, which means a state appointed dictator over our schools. We say NO to both.

Our success is measured first of all by how far our organizing has come, how far the common consciousness about what we are fighting for has come. It is measured by the unity achieved and determined spirit that says this fight is not over. It is measured in the fact that the public is standing true to its right and its demand: *Our Schools, We Decide!*

6 • OUR MOVEMENT WILL NOT BACK DOWN

the dictates of the Education Reformers, for we know these are public school dismantlers.

I want to share a quote from Mark Naison, a professor of African American Studies and History at Fordham University: “People from elite universities who propose to reform urban education remind me of the missionaries who accompanied the armies who invaded Africa and the Americas and turned them into colonies.”

It is you Board members, parent group leaders and community activists supporting this reform agenda that remind me of the missionaries and armies. The destruction of Buffalo Public Schools will forever be tied to you. You will be on the wrong side of history.

We here tonight are letting you know that we are on the right side of history. We will not make it easy for you to destroy our schools.

To my colleagues who have not yet joined this movement, I am begging you to be on the right side of history. Fear is not an option; it is a cop out.

Fight like your profession and students depend on it, because they do. Look around, the hearts, souls and educated minds in this movement have your back.

*Whose Schools? Our Schools!
Who Decides? We decide!*

I • RECEIVERSHIP NO SOLUTION

The large majority of Buffalo schools would already qualify for such takeover.

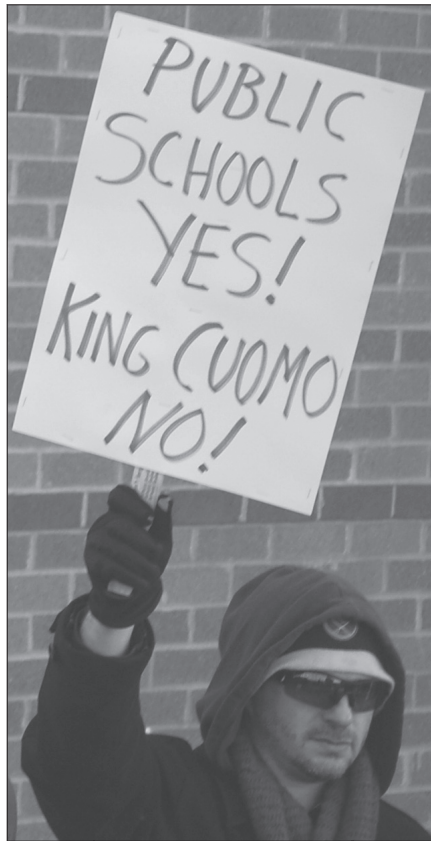
On February 12 his office called on the Board of Regents to investigate the “Massachusetts receivership model,” with the Lawrence Public Schools the main example. This model gives complete control to a single appointed individual to decide all matters not just generally in the district but for each individual school (see p. XXX). The receiver decides budget, curriculum, length of day and year, hiring and firing of principals, teachers and all board staff, salaries, merit pay, discipline, etc. He can decide to work with teachers or not, has power to show favoritism, to punish individuals and schools, to close schools, turn buildings over to charters, etc. All decisions rest in the hands of a single individual not accountable to parents, students, teachers, staff in the district, but to Cuomo.

**An Attack on Public’s Demand:
Our Schools, We Decide!**

Receivership is a means to directly attack the broad resistance and united stand that has developed in Buffalo: *Our Schools, We Decide!* The public as a whole and its demand for decision making is to have no place. Collective action by the public, such as that seen at recent board meetings, is to have no place. A receiver could decide to have no public meetings. Or, like the Control Board, have 3-4 meetings a year where the public can speak but the board is not obligated to answer or in any way submit to the will of the public.

A main aim in general, using the Lawrence example, is to eliminate independent *collective* action, by teachers and students. Collective action defending collective rights is the basis for affirming individual rights. Blocking it harms both collectives and individuals. Instead of united, district-wide actions, teachers and principals are to limit their concerns to their individual school and join the receiver in competing for financial and other rewards he alone chooses to give out.

The recent struggle in Buffalo has made clear that common united action for rights, of collectives, including the



public as a whole, is what is most needed in today’s world. Fighting together for the equal right to education for all demands cooperation and working together for the public interest. *Public Control of Public Schools* is what will move education in Buffalo forward. Expanding and enhancing the role of the public in decision making will move education forward. Receivership serves to do the opposite. It serves to eliminate decision making by the public, eliminate independent, united collective actions for rights and basically eliminate our schools as public institutions.

**Receivership Imposes
Common Core Regime**

The Massachusetts model is also one based on implementing the Common Core “standards” and its testing and evaluation regime. Common Core and its testing regime is the weapon that has paved the way for the broad attack on public education and opened the way for state receivership. It is what has

been used to impose a testing regime considered child abuse by parents, students and teachers alike. It has imposed a narrow curriculum and non-thinking manner for reading material that teaches only that students are to do and think what they are told. The “scoring” for the test in New York has been designed by the state — which they admitted — to ensure 70 percent of students fail. And when students supposedly fail, so do teachers.

The entire mechanism is anti-education and anti-public. Yet under the Lawrence receiver, all schools must submit to it, base their lessons and tests on it and submit to the state Common Core based standardize test as the only measure for “improvement” and “failure.” More than 60,000 students and parents refused the state tests in New York last year and many thousands more will do the same this year. Putting a receiver in place is a means to block this refusal and immediately punish any that participate, students, teachers and parents alike, something that is not possible at present.

Beware “Teacher Leader Teams”

In reviewing the plans of the current receiver in Lawrence, Massachusetts, it is notable that a main method used is that of “advisory” boards. In the Lawrence case this includes a “Teacher Leader Cabinet” to advise the appointed receiver. And there are “Teacher Leader Teams” at each school to work with the principals for plans for each school. No doubt the receiver has final decision making as to who is and is not a “teacher leader,” and what criteria is used to decide that. Teachers may advise, the receiver decides.

The model is similar to that used by major monopolies, like General Motors, to involve workers in “advising” how better to compete. Such models came into being at a time of broad resistance among autoworkers, just as they are not to be used during a time of broad resistance among teachers.

It was a method introduced to block the independent collective actions of

Receivership No Solution • 11

CUOMO'S MASSACHUSETTS EXAMPLE

Lawrence Receivership Example and Issues of Decision Making

Below we reprint excerpts from a letter by Jeffrey C. Riley, the state appointed receiver of the Lawrence School District in Massachusetts. Lawrence is one of the examples Governor Cuomo is utilizing as he plans a state takeover of New York State school districts, using receivership. Buffalo is a likely first target.

Receivership commonly involves the Governor, or state education commissioner, or similar executive appointing a single individual with broad powers to make decisions — dictate to — a school district. Elected governance is eliminated. The receiver's powers commonly include budget, contracts, hiring and firing, closing schools, handing them to charters, and so forth.

As the Massachusetts education commissioner, who appoints the receivers there, put it, "Under receivership, when the state takes over, we're no longer bound by the collective bargaining agreements or the budget and staffing decisions that have operated up until the receivership, so the state had the ability to make changes." He added, "We have complete control over the budget. Where collective bargaining agreements are an impediment to implementing the turnaround plan, we can implement changes ... and we have control over staffing." For charters he said, "So a charter operator that's a receiver for the state has those kinds of autonomies that they would have under a charter law. Where it's different is they are no longer governed by a non-profit board; they are now working under contract to the state."

The appointed receiver is free to decide about what the charters can do independent of any constraints in existing charter law.

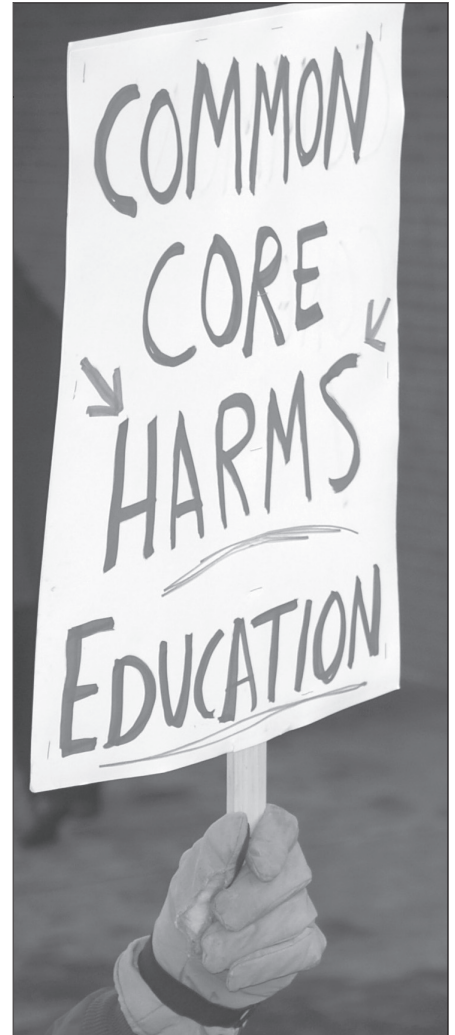
Lawrence, in particular, has a student population of about 14,000. It was the first district put under receivership by Massachusetts state officials. The letter is to the Lawrence District Faculty at the start of the 2014 school year.

Below are partial excerpts from the letter, highlighting issues of decision making by the receiver and teacher involvement, as advisors, in implementing the Common Core curriculum and testing regime. As the receiver put it: "Rigorous standards are the first pillar of high-quality teaching and learning." They are to be "monitored through annual standardized testing." And referring to his work with his Teacher Leader Cabinet on lessons, they are "Starting (as always!) from the state standards."

The Lawrence model uses what is called "open architecture" with minimum common standards for the district as a whole and "white spaces," where each school is given more or less "white space" to work out its plans. It also includes merit pay for teachers and using a stipend instead of regular hourly pay for longer school days. The complete letter can be found at: http://www.lawrence.k12.ma.us/users/0files/flyers/Our_Way_Forward_2.pdf

**Excerpts of Letter to Lawrence
Faculty from State Receiver
Jeffrey C. Riley**

"Open architecture is fundamentally about



differentiation. If differentiated instruction allows us to customize teaching to individual students' needs, open architecture allows us to customize supports to individual

Lawrence Receivership Example • 12

10 • RECEIVERSHIP NO SOLUTION

workers in their own self-interests and instead involve them in advancing the interests of General Motors in its global competition. Today, for the school-based model, the Lawrence example takes into account what is needed, and being demanded — for teachers, staff, students and parents themselves to be decision makers. It then corrupts this just demand by allowing only an "advisory" role,

not a deciding one. And by instilling individual competition, among teachers and schools, and not collective action for rights. And again, there is not space for students and parents to join in deciding and in fostering united collective action in the interests of the public as a whole. The district is disintegrated instead into competing individual schools, using what is called "open architecture."

These are modern times that call for modern solutions that necessarily center on decision making by the people themselves. That is the requirement of the times, that is what the Buffalo experience is demonstrating and that is the direction needed. Receivers, like czars and kings, are all relics of the past with no place in the present. To Cuomo we repeat: *Our Schools, We Decide!*

11 • LAWRENCE RECEIVERSHIP EXAMPLE

schools' needs. Our model provides broad autonomy for schools that are excelling and more intensive interventions for those schools that are not. Indeed, we recognize that the performance of our schools is on a continuum and can vary from year to year. As such, the top-down, one-size-fits-all set of policies traditionally imposed by central offices or union contracts must be made more flexible. Only then can progress be made at each school.

"When I first came to the district, I was focused on three things: 1) opening up "white space" for schools by clearing out former top-down policies; 2) identifying what was working in the district and expanding on it; 3) introducing schools to new practices I had seen work effectively to lift student achievement. These supports include extended time used well, including high quality student enrichment and teacher collaboration time; using student data to drive instruction; and targeted interventions that meet individual students where they are, such as acceleration academies.

"We've also asked every school to set its own hours and calendar for the year, create its own plan for developing common core-aligned curricula, and design its own professional development for educators. Our new teachers' contract provides for teacher voice as a key component of this process, where Teacher Leadership Teams at each school work with the principals to set school policies. This is the core of open architecture — each school team designing the program and plan that will accelerate achievement for their students, based on the unique factors at their school.

"Now, this doesn't mean that any proposal will fly. We maintain strong recommendations that schools choose strategies we have seen work well — whether that be sending students to the Lawrence Public Schools acceleration academies over February and April breaks or an extended day in K-8 schools. However, if principals and school teams want to propose an alternative plan that will deliver better results for students, we support and encourage that. And centrally, we provide schools with advisors who support them in making these decisions and help them look

for ways to learn from one another about what is working.

"Where we are now is a district where schools set their own course. And I need each of you to be active participants moving your school forward in the coming years.

"Now, to be clear, there are times where I will intervene centrally if a school is not headed in the right direction and I do not see a clear plan in place to reverse course. When I arrived in Lawrence there were a few schools where drastic action was needed to improve student performance. And I cannot rule out that this could happen again, particularly with schools that fall to Level 4 status. In these cases, we've turned to innovative school models like the Oliver Partnership School, which is run in collaboration with the local and national AFT, or non-profit management organizations like Unlocking Potential or The Community Group. [...]

"Open architecture is what unites us as a district, while still recognizing that each school is unique. It sets up a common model of ground rules for all schools in the district, but allows both the district and the schools to take a differentiated approach to setting each school's program."

Lawrence uses the same federally-based "high" and "low" designations for their schools, using annual state tests to determine student "improvement" and school "standings." Like in New York, the state tests have been widely opposed in Massachusetts by parents and teachers as arbitrary, anti-education, and not a tool for measuring student or teacher development.

In Lawrence the receiver has established a "career ladder" with merit, or incentive pay. Such pay is known to greatly increase competition among teachers, not collaboration, and use of favoritism and punishment by the individual granting the pay, in this case the appointed receiver. It is also not clear on what basis, other than state test scores, a teacher is considered "advanced" or "master" or a "leader." What is clear is that the appointed receiver decides. In his letter he brings out:

"I use a very basic tool to think about our teachers' readiness to do the tough work of creating rigorous, engaging lessons



— a diagram called the "will/skill matrix." Ask yourself, where do you fall in this chart? [The chart has four quadrants, "low skill/low will," "low skill/high will," "high skill, low will," and "high skill, high will," BF Ed. Note]

"This is an oft-used tool within teaching and other professions and is widely cited. I believe that when looking at both skill and will, the vast majority of our teachers today — over 95% — are great, good or working hard to improve.

"Teachers in each of these quadrants need different types of support. We need to grow educators with high will/low skill — those who are just starting in their careers and need to be developed. We need to re-enlist those with high skill but low will — talented experienced teachers who may have lost some of the zeal that attracted them to teaching. And we need to make sure we recognize, retain, and reward our best teachers — those with high skill and high will. To do this, we've created a career ladder with Advanced and Master roles, where great teachers can share their talents with others and earn up to \$85,000. We've formed a Teacher Leader Cabinet, where teachers advise me on district strategy. And we have the Sontag Prize, where top teachers receive an award, professional development at Harvard, and a significant stipend to teach struggling students over school vacations."

OPPOSING COMMON CORE STATE TESTS

Resolution to Support the “I Refuse” Movement

New York State Allies for Public Education

Across New York State (NYS), parents and educators are combining forces to push back against harmful “reform” policies and [defend] child centered public education in New York State. Parents and Educators will continue to insist to Governor Cuomo and Chancellor Tisch that our children and their teachers are more than a score and that we reject their attacks on public education.

New York State Allies for Public Education (NYSAPE), Port Jefferson Station Teacher’s Association (PJSTA) [and other organizations] have collaborated to write the following Test Refusal/APPR Resolution. These organizations encourage education leaders and local union chapters across NYS to adopt this resolution. By adopting this resolution, local unions pledge to oppose high stakes testing, to advocate for an engaged and socially relevant curriculum that is student-based and supported by research; and to ask that their members to refuse the NYS tests for their own children in grades 3-8. [The resolution, and locals supporting it, is to be presented to the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) Representative Assembly, May 1-2 in Buffalo — BF Ed Note].

Please share this resolution widely and show your support and solidarity for this action by displaying the “My Child is Refusing the NYS Tests” or “Less Testing, More Teaching” bumper sticker. These stickers and magnets are available in the NYSAPE Café Press store.

* * *

Resolution to Support “The I Refuse Movement” to Oppose High Stakes Testing

WHEREAS, the purpose of education is to educate a populace of critical thinkers who are capable of shaping a just and equitable society in order to lead good and purpose-filled lives, not solely prepare that populace for college and career; and

WHEREAS, instructional and cur-

ricular decisions should be in the hands of classroom professionals who understand the context and interests of their students; and

WHEREAS, the education of children should be grounded in developmentally appropriate practice; and

WHEREAS, high quality education requires adequate resources to provide a rich and varied course of instruction, individual and small group attention, and wrap-around services for students; and

WHEREAS, the state assessments are not transparent in that teachers and parents are not allowed to view the tests and item analysis will likely not be made available; and

WHEREAS, the assessment practices that accompany Common Core State Standards – including the political manipulation of test scores – are used as justification to label and close schools, fail students, and evaluate educators; therefore be it

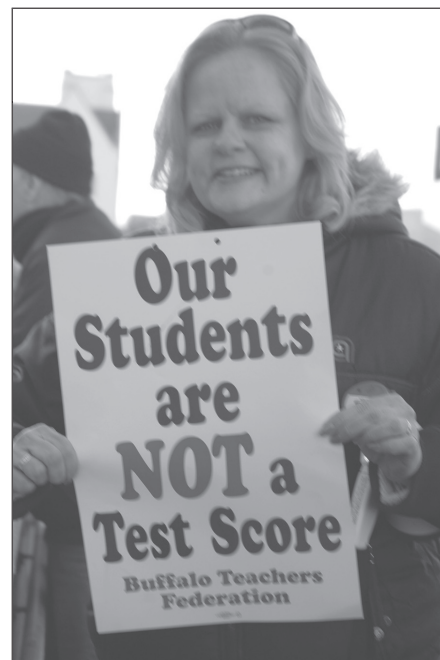
RESOLVED that New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) opposes standardized high stakes testing that is currently pushed by the Federal and State governments, because this testing is not being used to further instruction for children, to help children, or to support the educational needs of children; and be it further

RESOLVED, that NYSUT advocates for an engaged and socially relevant curriculum that is student-based and supported by research; and be it further

RESOLVED, that NYSUT will embark on internal discussions to educate and seek feedback from members regarding standardized high stakes testing and its impact on students; and be it further

RESOLVED, that NYSUT will lobby the NYS Education Department (NYSED) to eliminate the use of high stakes testing; and be it further

RESOLVED, that NYSUT will ask that all of its members have their own children refuse to take the Grade 3-8 assessments; and be it further



RESOLVED, that NYSUT will organize other members and affiliates to increase opposition to high stakes testing; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution will be sent to the NYS Education Department (NYSED), the Governor of NYS, and all members of the NYS legislative branch; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that after this resolution is passed by [YOUR LOCAL'S NAME] Representative Council, an appropriate version will be submitted to the American Federation of Teachers for consideration at the AFT July 2015 Convention and to NYSUT for consideration at the 2015 Representative Assembly.

The following teacher associations have approved the “I Refuse” resolution, including Hamburg, Lancaster, Springville and West Seneca:

Associated Teachers of Huntington
Baldwin Teachers Association
Bellmore-Merrick United Secondary Teachers
Bellport Teachers Association
Bethpage Congress of Teachers

I Refuse Resolution • 15

Long Island Teacher Refuses To Administer Common Core Tests, Urges Others To Join Her

Jaime Franchi, Long Island Press

Beth Dimino, an eighth-grade science teacher in the Comsewogue School District and president of the Port Jefferson Station Teachers Association, will be the first Long Island teacher to “opt-out” of administering mandated state standardized tests this April.

An outspoken opponent of the Obama administration’s controversial Common Core education reforms — new academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA) rolled out nationwide last year that have sparked protests among countless students, parents and teachers across Long Island and the country — Dimino was just one of several local school officials, elected officials, parents, and nonprofit leaders who railed against the program at a rally last March at Comsewogue High School attended by hundreds of “Opt-Out” supporters.

More than 20,000 Long Island (LI) school children refused to take the state tests last April. No teacher, however, has gone so far as Dimino to publicly voice his/her intention to refuse to even proctor the exams. She tells the Press her unprecedented decision is simply a matter of conscience, and spelled out as much in a recent letter to Comsewogue Superintendent Dr. Joe Rella, who’s also gone on record as a staunch Common Core dissident.

“I find myself at a point in the progress of education reform in which clear acts of conscience will be necessary to preserve the integrity of public education,” she writes. “I can no longer implement policies that seek to transform the broad promises of public education into a narrow obsession with the ranking and sorting of children.

“I will not distort curriculum in order to encourage students to comply with bubble test thinking,” continues her letter. “I can no longer, in good conscience, push aside months of instruction to compete in a state-wide ritual of meaningless and



academically bankrupt test preparation. I have seen clearly how these reforms undermine teachers’ love for their profession and undermine students’ intrinsic love of learning.”

Dimino hopes other local educators will follow her lead and oppose subjecting their students to the tests by refusing to administer them.

“The next logical step has to be the movement of conscientious objectors,” she tells the Press. “I believe, and I said this to [New York State Education Commissioner John] King and [state Board of Regents Chancellor Merrill] Tisch and [state] Senator [John] Flanagan at the Three Village Rally [in November 2013], that this is child abuse. I believe that it is child abuse. I believe that giving these tests to my students makes me culpable in the abuse of children and I can no longer do that.”

Dr. Rella supports and respects her decision.

“I have known Beth for over 20 years,” he says. “This was not something she has done lightly. There was a lot of soul searching that went on and she said to me, as a matter of conscience, she cannot participate. She cannot proctor this test. And I support that.”

Dimino and Rella harbor a host of

reasons why they are so opposed to Common Core, ranging from what they deem as a lack of focus and an erroneous substitution for actual hands-on, in-the-classroom, traditional teaching, to myriad issues with the actual exams themselves, which utilize problem-solving and reason-centric approaches to not only answering but understanding subject material questions.

“These tests are meaningless,” Dimino blasts. “They do not show us anything that a test is supposed to show us. Tests are supposed to show us how children are doing, how proficient children are in the work we’re teaching them. So then we can either modify our pedagogy and review it and do it again because the children didn’t get it, or understand that the children got it and move on to the next piece of the puzzle, which is teaching that particular piece of curriculum. These tests do not inform on that level at all.”

A major gripe of Dimino and other Common Core critics is that teachers are not part of crafting the test, not permitted to view the whole test and not even privy to tests’ answers. Additionally, she laments, instructors are not allowed to discuss the test among peers and do not get students’ scores until the next school year.

“So the children aren’t actually in third grade when they get the results of the test,” she explains. “The parents don’t get the test until the fourth grade, so the children have either been promoted or held back, but in fact, that third-grade test was not used in any way to help that third grader.”

Rella agrees, listing as one of his main critiques about Common Core that the passing score for the tests are actually set months after the tests are given.

In 2013, the first year students took the exams, for example, the state education department predicted a 70-percent failure

Teacher Refuses to Give State Test • 15

13 • I REFUSE RESOLUTION

Brentwood Teachers Association
Brockport Teachers Association
Camden Teachers Association
Central Islip Teachers Association
Clarkstown Teachers Association
Connetquot Teachers Association
Farmingdale Federation of Teachers
Fulton Teachers Association
Hamburg Teachers Association
Hastings Teachers Association
Ichabod Crane Teachers Association
Islip Teachers Association
Kingston Teachers Federation
Lancaster Central Teachers Association.
Lakeland Federation of Teachers
Lawrence Teachers' Association
Levittown Teachers Union
Locust Valley School Employees Association
Lynbrook Teachers Association
Miller Place Teachers Association
MORE Caucus (NYC)
New Hartford Teachers Association
New Paltz United Teachers
New Rochelle Federation of United



School Employees
New York Mills Teachers' Association
North Rockland Teachers Association
North Syracuse Education Association
Patchogue-Medford Congress of Teachers
Plainedge Federation of Teachers
Plainview-Old Beth Page Congress of Teachers
Port Jefferson Teachers Association
Port Jefferson Station Teachers Association
Rocky Point Teachers Association
Rome Teachers Association

Sherburne-Earlville Teachers' Association
Smytown Teachers Association
Springville Faculty Association
Shoreham Wading River Teachers Association
Teachers Association of Lindenhurst
Troy Teachers Association
Valley Stream Teachers Association
West Babylon Teachers Association
West Canada Valley Teachers Association
West Genesee Teachers' Association
West Seneca Teachers Association

14 • TEACHER REFUSES TO GIVE STATE TESTS

rate, which came to fruition when results eventually came back that August. Similarly, last year's pass rate was predicted to be 35 percent.

"At this rate, with the success rate going up 5 percent per year, it will be 10 years before these children will know success," he blasts. "They will go through their entire education experience as failures."

Rella thus believes these tests are "designed to make children fail [and] are unconscionable." [...]

The Dimino Effect

Dimino, by refusing to administer the upcoming Common Core tests, is effectively risking her job for what she believes, and implores others to do the same. She believes there are many other

teachers out there that may feel the same way but are prevented from acting for fear of jeopardizing their positions. And because of those mixed signals, many parents are confused about whether or not opting out of the tests is the best option for their children.

To help clarify this, she's also putting forth a proposal before the New York State United Teachers Federation (NYSUT) asking that all teachers who have school age children refuse to let them take the exams.

This resolution, which Dimino co-authored, passed her union unanimously, she says, and will be brought to the NYSUT general assembly meeting in April, and aims to coordinate local teachers unions across the state in opting their children out of the tests in solidarity.

Jeanette Deutermann, the mastermind behind the 17,000-plus member anti-Common Core Long Island Opt-Out Movement, who helped contribute to the more than 60,000 students refusing the tests in New York state last year, sees teachers refusing to administrate the tests as the next logical step in their mission to end them.

"This is the natural progression of our fight against high-stakes testing that is depleting public school resources, hijacking our children's classrooms, and turning the love of learning into fear and punishment," she says. "Parents of Long Island Opt Out and New York State Allies for Public Education stand behind any educator in the position to take this courageous action on behalf of our children."

*Visit our website: **usmlo.org***

FOUR-DAY ACTION DEMANDS ANDERSON'S RESIGNATION

Newark Student Union Organizes Sit-In at Superintendent's Office

For four days, the Newark Student Union organized a sit in at the offices of state-appointed Superintendent Cami Anderson. The high school students took over the office the night of a School Board meeting, where they had spoken and raised their concerns that Anderson should not be given another year in office. Instead, Newark schools should be controlled by the people of Newark.

The students, some from the city's vaunted Science Park High School, left the board meeting as a group and then organized their sit-in in Anderson's office, demanding that she resign immediately. They gave as one reason, among others, her failure for a year to attend board meetings, including the one the students had just left. Anderson is paid \$300,000 a year, but does not consider board meetings of any significance.

Anderson's attorney, present in the building when the sit-in started, came and threatened the students with arrest for trespassing on private property. She said this to public school students, in a public building of New Jersey's largest public school system.

The students demanded to speak with Anderson and she refused. She did not even come to her office. She also sent threatening letters to the parents of the students, who all stood with their children and their demand for public control of the schools. Officials also blocked food and blankets for the students, donated by the community. As has become customary with such actions, people ordered pizza for the students, a local restaurant also provided food and clergy stepped in to be sure it was delivered to the students.

Superintendent Anderson refused to speak with the students or even appear at her office for three days. The students were not idle. They organized to discuss the problems in their schools and set-up a live feed on youtube to keep all concerned informed about developments. Support came in from across the country, as many students face the common problems of unequal education and undemocratic governance of their public schools.

For example, at the same time Newark students were engaged in their second night in Anderson's office, the state appointed School Reform Commission (SRC) that controls Philadelphia public schools was having citizens arrested for protesting the SRC decision to expand charter schools.

Newark was one of the first cities to face state takeover, two decades ago, and Philadelphia followed not long after. These state takeovers have not served to raise the quality of public education or make it more equal in either city. Rather, conditions for teaching and learning have become worse for students and teachers in both cities.

The issue of public control, expressed in various ways all across the country, is coming to the fore. The sit-in spread that discussion and raised the importance of those directly involved in the public schools — teachers, staff, students, parents, the public in general — having control over them. They discussed questions like “What gives the state or federal government the right to come in and take over public schools?” and “What about our rights?” They also opposed the upcoming state standardized tests as invalid and unjust.

As the sit-in continued, the teachers union discussed holding a strike if the students were forcibly removed. Various organizations rallied outside the building expressing their support. Mayor Ras Baraka, who also supports parents refusing the state testing regime, joined the students in calling for Anderson's resignation.

The Newark Student Union has also exposed some of the money-making going on by corporate school reformers, really deformers of public education. As one example, five years ago, Newark Schools received a \$100 million gift from Facebook's



Mark Zuckerberg to “turn around” the district. The project is called One Newark. The person in control is Anderson.

However, instead of raising the quality of the schools, she has been responsible for closing or relocating schools, opening new charter schools and displacing staff. And no improvement to district services has occurred.

Where is the money going? That is not known entirely, but at least part of it has been Anderson's spending of \$37 million on consulting fees to prominent school deformers.

On the fourth day Anderson finally showed herself and spoke with the students. Students considered having the meeting a positive step, as Anderson refuses to speak with students and the community more generally. The students issued the following statement: “After 65 hours of occupation, we, the Newark Student Union, met with the state-appointed Superintendent of the Newark Public Schools, Cami Anderson, in regards to her lack of communication with the students, parents, and the broader community of Newark, New Jersey. Due to her continued inability to have an open and constructive dialogue with us, she has inevitably created a deep mistrust against the administration and its policies. At this point, the students remain committed to the demand that she resign immediately.” They then left the office while affirming they will continue their fight for public control.