

Buffalo Forum



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

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August 21, 2015

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State Test Scores Not a Valid Measure

State Education Commissioner Elia has determined what the requirements will be for receivership schools to show “demonstrable improvement.” While they are being called “metrics,” they cannot be considered a reliable and accurate measure of anything. This is because the means used to secure the “metrics,” such as Common Core state testing scores for students, are not valid or accurate. They are arbitrary, meaning they are not based on reason or evidence but rather are the unrestrained and autocratic use of authority by the state.

As parents, teachers and students by the hundreds of thousands have explained, the tests do not measure a student’s learning levels and abilities. They do not assess what has and has not been learned, in part because readings are out of context, questions are inconsistent with class curriculum and the scoring inconsistent with usual grading. Last year, for example, a 77 was considered failing, when it is commonly a passing

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RALLY SEPTEMBER 2

Refuse the Tests, Refuse Receivership By Defending Rights

Dr. Cash has now become the superintendent receiver for 25 of Buffalo’s public schools and superintendent for the rest. He did not apply for the job of superintendent and instead was handpicked by state Education Commissioner Elia. One of his first comments after being appointed

was to say the Buffalo Schools are now “under construction,” and “as always, whenever you’re in a construction zone, put on a hard hat.” The indication being that teachers, students, staff and parents should be prepared to suffer harm and

Refuse Receivership • 3

SCHOOL BOARD COMMUNITY MEETING AUGUST 13

Public Control Solution, Not State Takeover

The Buffalo Board of Education held a Community Meeting August 13 about the state takeover of 25 Buffalo public schools, using receivership. Forced into a smaller room at Performing Arts, though the auditorium was available, the meeting was packed with more than 130 people,

Public Control • 4

Receivership and Power to Fire All Without Cause

One of the main powers given to the receiver that generally is either being ignored or greatly downplayed or misrepresented by material from the state is the power to fire, without cause, all teachers and staff at a receivership school. While power-point presentations often include one or two phrases on these matters, they do not address the significance of this

Power to Fire Without Cause • 6

End U.S. War Games in Korea Now! All U.S. Troops Home Now

The U.S. is once again carrying out massive war games in Korea, greatly raising tensions and threatening to bring war to the region. The current war games, known as Ulchi Freedom Guardian (UFG), are one of several annual war games involving tens of thousands of U.S. and Korea troops. They routinely involve drills for the bombing and takeover of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), including using her flag as a

bombing target. The DPRK has strenuously objected to the war games year after year as part of efforts to establish conditions for peace on the peninsula. But the U.S. refuses to end games and also draws other countries into them. Instead of war games, what is needed is the signing of a peace treaty and bilateral negotiations to normalize relations. This, and bringing all U.S. troops home is what would contribute to peace.

UFG is being conducted by the Republic of Korea (ROK)-United States Combined Forces Command (CFC) from August 17 to 28. The war games likely involve nuclear weapons, as the U.S. has threatened their first strike use and keep their so-called “tactical” nuclear weapons at the ready. Nonetheless, a press release on the website of the United States Forces Korea (USFK), claims these war games

End U.S. War Games in Korea • 12

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REFUSE RECEIVERSHIP

Public meetings for Twenty-Five Buffalo Schools Under Receivership

Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, has put 25 Buffalo schools under receivership, 5 “persistently struggling,” with one year to show improvement and 20 “struggling schools,” with two. Superintendent Cash is the appointed receiver. Cash is now conducting public meetings at each of the twenty-five schools. These meetings are supposed to explain why the school is in receivership, the powers of the receiver and how parents, students and teachers can participate in Community Engagement Teams, etc. The 25 schools and dates/times for meetings are:

“Persistently Struggling”

Burgard Vocational High School PS#301
South Park High School PS#206
Buffalo Elementary School of Technology PS#6
Marva J. Daniel Futures Prep School PS#37
West Hertel Elementary School PS#94

Date/Time

August 19/5pm
September 17/6pm
September 9/5:30pm
August 27/4pm
August 12/4pm

“Struggling”

Bennett High School PS#200
East High School PS#307
Lafayette High School PS#204
McKinley Vocational High School PS#305
Riverside Institute of Technology PS#205
Bilingual Center PS#33
Build Academy PS#91
Dr. Charles Drew Science Magnet PS#59
Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence PS#89
D’youville-Porter Campus PS#3
Early Childhood Center PS#17
Frank A. Sedita School PS#30
Hamlin Park Elementary School PS#74
Harriet Ross Tubman Academy PS#31
Harvey Austin School PS#97
Herman Badillo Community School PS#76
Highgate Heights PS#80
Inter Prep School-Grover Cleveland #198
North Park Academy PS#66
Waterfront School PS#95

September 8/5pm
September 9/6pm
August 19/5pm
September 21/6pm
September 15/4pm
September 14/4pm
August 20/6pm
September 15/4pm
Sept. 12/12pm; Sept. 15/9am; Sept. 17/3:30pm
September 10/5pm
September 17/3:45pm
August 27/5pm; Sept. 18/10:30am
September 17/4:00pm
September 17/5:30pm
September 9/5:30pm
September 15/5:30
September 10/5pm
September 2/5pm
September 12/11:30am
September 10/5:30pm



I • REFUSE RECEIVERSHIP

injury. Certainly, he intends to use his powers as receiver to “construct” schools where *he* and the Commissioner decide. Decision making by parents, teachers, staff and students, is what is required for a modern democracy.

The agenda of Cash is that of Elia and Cuomo. He is implementing receivership and implementing privatization, with private interests like Microsoft taking over public institutions like public schools. This is further indicated by the support he has from main backers of the narrow Common Core curriculum and unjust testing regime, used to close schools, hand public funds and buildings to private charter schools, etc. He received tens of millions in funding from Microsoft’s Bill Gates, and has backing from the Broad Foundation and Aspen Institute, both responsible for privatization and wrecking of public education.

Whatever may be said about serving children, like Cuomo and Elia, his agenda is against the public interest and against the right of the public to decide. Otherwise, he would begin by promising not to exercise his powers to fire all teachers at staff at receiver schools and impose separate “receivership agreements,” (see p.5). That is what the media should ask and the public is demanding.

It remains to be seen what stand Cash will take on students refusing the state tests. But Elia has already proclaimed that educators supporting parents and students in refusing the tests are “unethical.” And that she may punish schools with high refusal rates by withholding state funds. What is unethical is such blackmail and such arbitrary dictate using test scores. And what is undemocratic is state take-over of public schools, using the dictate of receivership.

Refuse by Defending Rights

Parents and students are gearing up to organize to refuse the state tests, and all the many pre-tests and post-tests that go with them, right from the start of the school year. Almost 20 percent of students statewide refused last year, which exposed

the test scores for what they are — useless and invalid for measuring anything about the quality of education and student learning. Students are becoming a bigger force in the organizing, as they mobilize friends



and parents to join in refusing.

It is the right of parents and students to defend their interests by refusing testing that is harmful and invalid and against the public good. It is the right of teachers to support such efforts and themselves refuse to administer tests they know to be child abuse.

The *Refuse the Tests* movement has served to broadly unite parents, students and teachers, activating them to reject state dictate and demand public control. Indeed their stand is an expression of that public control, as it serves the public interest.

Resistance is Duty

The state is also promoting that now that receivership is here, all that can be done is to work with the receiver, Dr. Cash, and the mechanism provided by the law, the Community Engagement Team (CET). Shouting in protest, the state claims, will not help, as the law is the law.

Those organizing to refuse are instead advancing the stand that when injustice is law, resistance is duty. It is only by fighting that our rights and dignity can be defended.

The aim of organizing is to strengthen the organized quality of resistance, raise the level of common thinking and broaden the unity of all. The rallies organized are not for purposes of pressuring politicians, but rather for purposes of working together, strengthening our organization and developing our own program for empowerment. It is through conscious efforts by leading forces, like Buffalo Forum, and united actions and speaking out at school board meetings by many, and organizing discussion that the public can form its conscious support for its demands: *Public Control of Public Schools* and *Our Schools, We Decide!*

It is by starting from the position of defending rights that ways to refuse and resist can be found. We can refuse receivership by refusing the firing, without cause, of teachers and staff. Defend their rights and reject the receiver! We can refuse receivership by mobilizing all to refuse “receivership agreements,” designed to wreck our district and separate teachers, parents and students in each school to fend for themselves.

We can refuse by refusing the tests, a main means used to put schools in receivership and keep them there. We can refuse by demanding that the Buffalo City Charter requiring elected governance of public schools be upheld and call on the School Board to take action on this. We can refuse by standing with the receivership schools and joining in Refuse Receivership rallies and “Refuse Days” at receivership schools, where students, teachers, staff and parents will stand together.

The state has the responsibility not to take over our public schools but to provide the equal right to education for all. It is the state that is the barrier to the right of the public to decide and defending that right means it is necessary to *Refuse Receivership!*

I • PUBLIC CONTROL NOT STATE TAKEOVER

many forced to stand. All were concerned about what state takeover will mean for the public schools. The presentation given by Interim Superintendent Darren Brown utilized material from the state. It provided information about how the state has organized the takeover and the sweeping powers given to state Education Commissioner Elia and the local receiver, now Superintendent Cash. However no evidence, information or even rational argument for how this takeover will in any way deal with providing the equal right to education for all was presented.

The public on the other hand, at board meetings, rallies, forums and elsewhere has shown that it has rational arguments and solutions. This includes a broad curriculum, with music, art, physical education, history, social studies and more, not the narrow Common Core curriculum focused on English and math. It includes recognizing poverty and inequality as key issues to address, issues that receivership ignores. It includes the need to increase the decision-making role of parents, teachers, students and staff.

The various questions raised by teachers and parents in the short time allotted brought out the widespread concerns with state takeover. Some people brought out that while additional limited funds were available for 5 of the 25 schools, it's not enough and such funding for only a few schools generates more inequality in the district, not less.

Others raised concerns about the powers of the Commissioner and her abilities to arbitrarily keep schools under state takeover and put more schools on the takeover list. The Buffalo public already has considerable experience in how arbitrary and unjust the state is when it comes to refusing to approve positive re-design plans and refusing to support students by providing the funding needed. Use of state testing as a main indicator is

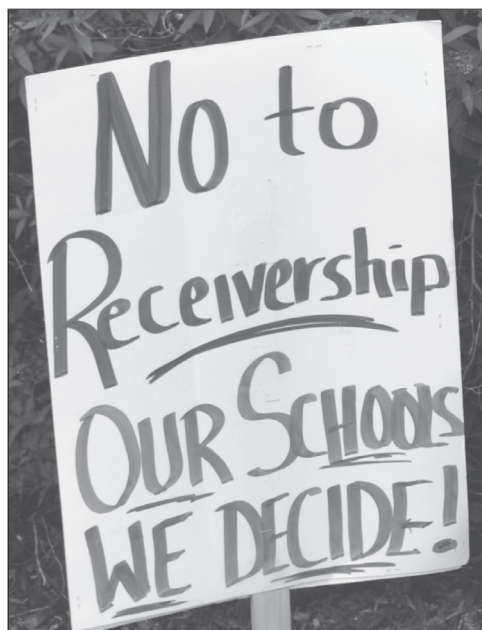
also arbitrary, as the test scores do not reflect the learning levels or abilities of the students. No answer was provided as to what will stop such arbitrary and unjust actions in the future. Indeed, when one participant raised that the entire set up was designed to ensure failure, the crowd applauded in support. This further indicated that the aim of receivership is not to improve the schools, but rather to further undermine and wreck public education.

The power of the receiver to impose separate "receiver agreements" and thus begin the destruction of the district was also raised, with no response provided. The Commissioner can impose such agreements even when teachers and staff think they are harmful to students and vote no. These agreements are a state effort to weaken the ability of parents, teachers and students *district-wide* to make demands for *all* children (like music and physical education) and raise the quality of all schools by defending rights. Parents and teachers alike are calling on the elected Board of Education (BOE) to join in opposing any individual "receiver agreements" as unjust and harmful to the district.

Many other questions went unanswered as the meeting ended as the meeting with now Superintendent Dr. Cash began in the auditorium. Among other concerns are:

1) Why is a single appointed receiver, accountable to New York State Education Commissioner Elia a better solution than public control of public schools, where parents, teachers, staff and students together decide?

2) Teachers, parents, students, staff and administrators are far more able to design ways to assess students and teachers and schools. There is no evidence the state has any solutions for this problem. On the contrary, its testing and assessment regime is recognized statewide as child abuse,



arbitrary and not a legitimate measure of anything. If the state was actually serious about improving the schools, it would empower parents, teachers, students and staff to *decide*.

3) The Buffalo City Charter calls for elected governance of the public schools. The receiver is not elected. Commissioner Elia is not elected. The Buffalo School Board (BOE) is losing power over these 25 schools. The BOE and all elected officials should be opposing this takeover as contrary to the Charter and New York's home rule statutes.

The school board and Superintendent Cash need to address how engaging parents and teachers in supporting state takeover will solve any problem. The evidence here in Buffalo, is that these state efforts embroil people in striving to develop positive plans and solutions, only to find the state refusing them and imposing its own. Evidence here and elsewhere, like Newark and New Orleans is that state takeovers solve no problem while undermining and eliminating public schools and districts.

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UNDERMINING COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

Receivership Agreements Will Serve to Divide the District

One of the more important powers consistently left out of presentations by the state about receivership is that of imposing a separate “receivership agreement,” on a receivership school. While phrasing like “request changes to the collective bargaining agreement,” are used, the ability of the receiver to require a “receiver agreement,” with each school, that only those teachers and staff vote on, is often not elaborated and/or greatly minimized. Indeed, when this issue has been raised as a problem for discussion, the interim superintendent has said the statements about such agreements are “inaccurate.” Or, for a women raising it, that she had “fragile knowledge,” about it. Then the additional ability to request changes to the bargaining agreement, through Memorandum of Understanding for example, is used to divert from the fact that “receivership agreements” can be imposed.

For the benefit of Superintendent Cash, his representatives speaking to the public about receivership, and teachers, parents, students and staff, the following information is important.

The receiver can *compel* teachers and staff of a given receivership school to negotiate a “receivership agreement.” The agreement can cover “the length of the school day; the length of the school year; professional development for teachers and administrators; class size; and changes to the programs, assignments, and teaching conditions in the school in receivership.” The professional development and changes to assignments and conditions are not defined so they are up to the receiver. Remaining terms of the collective bargaining agreement for the district, like those for health care and pensions, remain in effect.

Using these “receivership agreements, teachers and staff at these schools will be forced to work under a different, separate agreement for significant issues like class size, assignments and teaching conditions. It is not the same as a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for these schools. It is a separate agreement voted on only

by “the bargaining unit members in the school.” This puts in place the practice of separating these schools and undermining collective strength of teachers, staff students and parents district-wide.

The law then states the following for schools branded “persistently struggling”:



“The bargaining shall be conducted between the receiver and the collective bargaining unit in good faith and completed not later than **thirty days** from the point at which the receiver requested that the bargaining commence. The agreement shall be **subject to ratification within ten business days by the bargaining unit members in the school**. If the parties are unable to reach an agreement within thirty days or if the agreement is not ratified within ten business days by the bargaining unit members of the school, the parties shall submit any remaining unresolved issues to the **commissioner who shall resolve any unresolved issues within five days**, in accordance with standard collective bargaining principles, (emphasis *BF*).

For schools branded “failing,” the law calls for the same time constraints, but it allows for a conciliator to be appointed. The conciliator has five days to resolve

any outstanding issues, and failing that, the Commissioner decides.

Unresolved Issues Decided

By Commissioner

In this manner the state has given the Commissioner the power not only to approve (or disapprove) a given agreement, she is also the one to decide any unresolved issues. There is little incentive for the receiver to even negotiate since he can count on the Commissioner to decide whatever he determines is required. The only real restriction is that the agreement “shall not provide for any reduction in compensation unless there shall be a proportionate reduction in hours” and there is a “proportionate increase” where the length of the school day or year is extended. If there is disagreement on what “proportional” means, the Commissioner decides.

Given the long experience with the powers of the Control Board to dictate terms, like the wage freeze, contrary to the contract, and given the powers now being given to the Commissioner and receiver, few expect these agreements to serve the interests and needs of the students and teachers.

The purpose of the agreement is said to be “the rapid achievement of students,” at the receivership school. However, unlike the wholesale firing (see p.1), the receiver is not required to state how these agreements will generate rapid achievement. For this reason, it is likely that such agreements will be the first round of attack by the receiver, and the wholesale firings would follow, as he decides.

If, as is expected, the schools stay in receivership for many years, these agreements will increasingly be used. More and more schools will be put in receivership and fewer and fewer schools will come under the district-wide collective agreement. These “agreements” are a mechanism not only to undermine teaching conditions, but to undermine the unity and collective strength of *all*, fighting for the rights of *all* children and for improving the quality of *all* schools.

I • POWER TO FIRE WITHOUT CAUSE

power attacking the collective rights and strength of teachers, students and parents alike. Or the great harm, disruption, and chaos such firings will cause. Confusion has also been spread that it only applies to an independent receiver, not a superintendent receiver. The superintendent receiver “is vested with all the powers granted to an independent receiver,” and has “sole judgement” (with Commissioner approval) on hiring and firing.

Power to Fire All

The power-point presentations given at public meetings by the state often have 2-3 pages on Community Engagement Teams, even though these have *no decision making powers*, especially as concerns wholesale firings. Reference to the receiver’s power to fire all is usually just a phrase like “require all staff to reapply for their positions.” Or another says simply “Restaff (one time).” This too is a false statement, as the Commissioner can allow it more than once at her discretion. Both phrases imply that staff need only reapply for their jobs and they will get them. The law and regulations, however, state the following.

1) In terms of using the power only one time, that is up to the Commissioner. Her regulations state: “Upon completion of the abolition and rehiring process...no further abolition of the positions of all members of the teaching and administrative and supervisory staff assigned to” the receivership school “shall occur without the prior approval of the commissioner.” So, the wholesale firing can occur as often as the Commissioner decides (Commissioner Regulations 100.19, p.33, June 23, 2015)

2) Both the law and regulations state, “a school receiver may abolish the positions of all members of the teaching and administrative and supervisory staff” and “terminate employment of any principal” of a receivership school and “require such staff members to reapply for their positions if they so choose.” (ibid, p.32). The receiver determines “the specific positions to be abolished and the timeline for such abolition and for the rehiring process.”

The law further states: “The receiver

shall have full discretion regarding hiring decisions but must fill at least fifty percent of the newly defined positions with the most senior former school staff *who are determined by the staffing committee to be qualified,*” (emphasis BF). The receiver determines the qualifications. The staffing committee is the receiver, his two appointees and two people from the union — meaning the receiver has a majority. Thus he could decide there are not enough qualified teachers to rehire 50 percent.

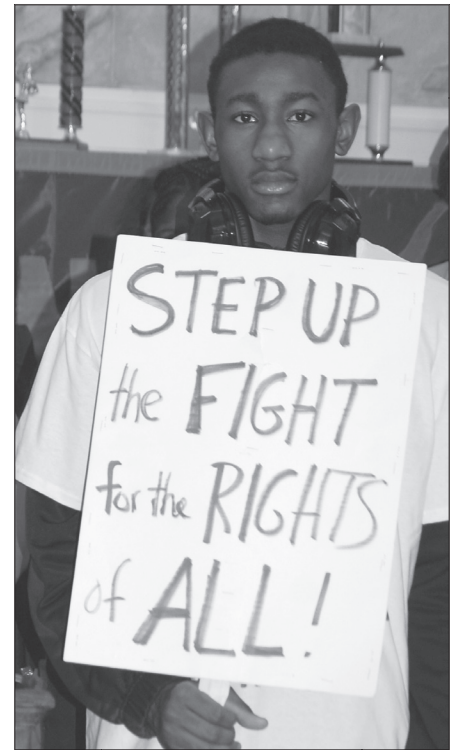
Further the law states that for those not rehired, they “shall not have any right to bump or displace any other person employed by the district, but shall be placed on a preferred eligibility list.” This is said to mean they could be rehired at another receivership school, as long as they do not bump anyone else.

Thus “abolishing positions” is a backhanded way of conducting wholesale firing without cause and eliminating senior teachers and staff, especially those rejecting receivership. It also eliminates the use of seniority *district-wide*, another step toward destruction of the district. It is a further example of efforts to weaken the *collective* strength of the teachers and students.

30 Day Written Notice

The regulations also provide for a timetable and certain requirements that can readily be met. These include that the receiver has to conduct “a comprehensive school needs assessment,” state how the planned firing will “result in improved student performance” and the expected “impact” of the firings on the “educational program of the school.” While words can readily meet these requirements, no mention is made of addressing the impact such chaos would impose on students and teachers.

The receiver “shall provide to the school staff and their collective bargaining representatives,” and the Board of Education written notice of the specific positions to be abolished and include the above requirements. This is to be done “no later than 90 days prior to any planned abolition.” The phrasing “no later” rather than



“no less” means it could be done in less than 90 days. The regulations also state that “No later than 30 days following issuance of the written notice,” the receiver “shall inform the school board in writing of the determination...whether to implement the plan for abolition of positions.” Thus the wholesale firing could be carried out in 30 days or slightly more.

This two-step process means for 30 days everyone is placed under great insecurity and anxiety, having received written notice, as to whether the firings will occur. It remains unclear if this law supercedes the New York WARN law, which requires 90 days written notice whenever there are “mass layoffs.” It is notable that the usual terms of termination and lay-off for teachers and staff are not used. Given that the law and regulations provide these broad powers, it is likely they will be utilized first and subject to court battles later, after the wholesale firing and disruption has occurred. When Superintendent Cash was asked if he planned to use these powers, he said firing all might be extreme, but he intended to use the power to put what *he decides* is “an excellent” teacher in front of every classroom.

Top Ten Reasons to Refuse Receivership

The Buffalo public has demanded:

1) Public control of public schools, where we the public, the parents, students, teachers, staff and community members, decide. *We are the experts, we know what is needed, like smaller classes, music and physical education for all now.*

2) Equal Right to Education for All. *We reject the inequality and segregation of Buffalo schools* and demand that the state take immediate action to fully fund all the schools based on their needs. It is the state that is failing, not our children and teachers.

3) Raising the quality of the public schools, by raising the quality of democracy. Concentrating power in the hands of appointed individuals solves no problem. We need to enhance and expand the power of the public. *Our Schools, We Decide!*

For these reasons we firmly oppose state take over using receivership for 25 Buffalo public schools. Receivership is an undemocratic assault on elected governance, with the appointed state Education Commissioner given great powers over the local appointed receiver, who in turn has power over such matters as budget, curriculum, hiring and firing, discipline, class size, teaching conditions, and more.

Top Ten Reasons to Oppose Receivership

1) *Receivership will take power from the public (parents, students, staff, teachers).* Receivership is an undemocratic state take over of the Buffalo public schools, that concentrates power in the hands of unelected individuals, accountable to the state, not the Buffalo public. It opens the way for privatizing public schools and using our public tax dollars to pay private companies.

2) *Receivership does not address the great inequality in our schools and indeed is again increasing it.* The law, passed as part of the budget, does not provide sufficient increased funding to meet the needs of all public schools. The schools targeted for takeover are minority and impoverished and again being forced to suffer the most.

3) *Receivership will likely mean fewer teachers of color in our schools, as the*

receiver can hire and fire as he decides.

4) *The receiver has power to fire all teachers and staff without cause, at each of the 25 schools.* This causes anxiety and uncertainty now, especially for younger children, and great chaos and instability when it happens. There could be a revolving door of teachers, and potentially use of individuals not certified in schools where stability and continuity are most needed. *We say organize now to demand the receiver promise not to use such disruptive and unjust powers* and to take further action if the receiver goes ahead with firing all, or a sizeable number of teachers, staff and administrators at any one of the 25 schools.

5) *Governance, collective bargaining, school leadership and staffing, parent and community engagement are not “barriers” to improving the schools.* The Commissioner put forward that all of these are “barriers” and the intent of receivership is to remove them. This makes clear that the intent is to attack rights and remove the public from governance. Public control of public schools that increases the role of the public in deciding is what is needed and it is the state that is the barrier.

6) *The receiver and state Education Commissioner can split up and divide our district by imposing separate “receiver agreements” at each school — even if teachers and staff have voted no.* These agreements will mean worse working conditions for teachers, which mean worse learning conditions for children. It also separates these students, parents and teachers from the district and weakens the ability of all to raise the quality of our public schools. **We say join efforts now to oppose firing without cause and to take further action if the receiver decides to impose “receiver agreements.”**

7) *Receivership will increase use of the Common Core state testing and evaluation regime and the narrow curriculum that goes with it.* Hundreds of thousands of parents statewide have rejected the state testing as unfair, developmentally inappropriate

and a form of child abuse. Receivership is a tool of the state to ignore this stand and impose the Common Core regime — as the receiver, not parents, students and teachers, decides all such matters. Commissioner Elia has already threatened to punish those who exercise their right to refuse. We say join the Refuse the Tests efforts now and mobilize others to do the same.

8) *The “measures for success” are rigged and unfair.* The state Education Commissioner decides what will constitute “demonstrable improvement,” with state test scores a main basis for many indicators. She also has power to say a school did not succeed and must remain in receivership, or that progress was made but receivership remains. Schools have long experienced the unfair use of state tests, where the state arbitrarily changes scoring and fails many who normally would pass. Even with improvement in graduation and attendance rates, schools, like Lafayette, East and Bennett are still branded as failing. *The data used is not reliable or accurate and diverts from the responsibility, and failure, of the state to guarantee the equal right to education for all.*

9) *Receivership was passed using bribes and blackmail.* This legislation was passed quickly, as part of the budget, with Cuomo using the blackmail of withholding all state education funds, and then the bribe of \$75 million for only 20 of the 144 schools statewide in receivership. Blackmail and bribes are the tools of gangsters.

10) *Receivership aims to block resistance and public involvement.* Apart from New York City, Buffalo has the most schools targeted, almost half the district. Governor Cuomo said our public schools deserve the “death penalty,” and he is using the force of receivership and blackmail to kill our public school district. The Buffalo public has been engaged and active and fighting for rights and raising the quality of our schools. We have solutions! *We say step up the organized resistance, and fight for district-wide unity of all!*

Our Schools, We Decide!

Our Schools, We Decide

The Community Engagement Teams (CETs), a part of receivership, are a means to take initiative out of the hands of the currently broadly organized and mobilized public and put it into the hands of the receiver and commissioner. It is an effort to divide and divert the movement for the equal right to education for all, which has given the necessary starting point for raising the quality of our schools — decision making by the students, teachers and parents.

We, the public, the teachers, staff, students and parents, and those we consider experts as they serve the public interest, are the experts, the most informed, knowledgeable and experienced. Yet instead of enhancing and extending the role of the public in *deciding*, a very few people from each school are being relegated to helping the receiver put in place an undemocratic, anti-public set up. It excludes the public from decision making and removes the receiver from public accountability. He is accountable to the Commissioner, not the public.

The alternative is to keep initiative in our hands by organizing to *Refuse Receivership!* Rather than reacting to the state's backward plans, let us persist in developing our own, including our own modern education. This means directing our time and resources to conducting and fighting for our own organizing for parent involvement, our own organizing for increasing student involvement, our own proposals for evaluating teachers and students, our own community surveys and needs assessments, our own workshops and public forums. We are the experts, we are the ones who affirm the equal right to education for all, we are the ones to decide!

"COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAMS"

Parent, Student and Community Involvement Already Limited

New York State, through both Governor Cuomo's law establishing receivership, and the Education Commissioner's relevant regulations, has made a considerable effort to present the law's Community Engagement Teams (CETs) as a way for teachers, students, parents and the public at large to have a significant role in their public schools. This has been done mainly by presenting the fact that the CETs are to include "the school principal, parents and guardians, teachers and other school staff and students," as well as community members and community organizations with "direct ties" to the school (like Say Yes).

However, important facts concerning the CETs are being ignored, such as that they have no decision-making power and the receiver, with Commissioner approval, has the final say about who the members are and how they can be removed.

This has been brought out by the presentations being made at each of the schools under receivership by the superintendent's representatives or principals. It is the receiver who has sweeping powers to decide the school improvement plans, with approval from the commissioner. The CETs submit recommendations — but the receiver can refuse to accept them, with the only requirement being that he explain why in writing. Given he has broad powers over curriculum, hiring and firing, discipline, testing, and more, the ability of the CET to recommend hardly compares. It is also no greater than that of existing School-Based Management Teams (SBMT's) required by the state, and perhaps will be even less.

It was also said at a recent school-based meeting — only when asked about how participation in the CET is decided — that if the receiver determines that a person participating is "obstructing" the committee, they can be removed. No definition of obstructing was given but it can be imagined that those parents and teachers actually fighting for what is *needed*, rather

than what the state dictates, would fall into the category. It has also been stated that parents are to contact the superintendent's representatives or school principal if they are interested in participating, although parents are supposed to be selected by parent organizations at the school.

Further, in most cases, the CETs were established without public announcements or full information provided to existing parent groups, such as the District Parent Coordinating Council (DPCC) and the Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization. It was simply announced that the CETs had been formed. As well, at meetings at the schools conducted so far, unless asked, information was not provided as to what steps parents needed to take to participate, what time commitment was involved, the numbers of parents and teachers to be involved, etc. The Buffalo District, for example, has regulations calling for "at least 5 parents," to participate, numbers which are not being met. It has also been reported that a quorum for the CETs will be only three, a single administrator, teacher and parent.

What is occurring in practice is that existing SBMTs are being co-opted to also be the CETs with the possibility of additional members to the CET as decided by the principal and receiver. Despite words to the contrary, in practice parent, student and community engagement is minimal and meant to be that way. From the start, the regulations are not being followed and parents, students and community members are not being provided the information, as required, to fully participate. This includes providing those who cannot attend meetings "with the opportunity to provide written comments and feedback in writing and/or electronically." No such mechanism currently exists in Buffalo.

Regulations for CETs

The education law that put receivership in place speaks both to CET composition and **Parent Involvement Already Limited • 10**

State Testing and the Requirements for “Demonstrable Improvement”

The Commissioner recently released “metrics,” or goals receivership schools will be required to meet in order to possibly be removed from the receivership list. Whether a school is removed, even if it shows improvement, is up to the Commissioner. According to her regulations, an annual review will be conducted by the Commissioner in consultation with the receiver, school board and Community Engagement Teams (CETs). Buffalo’s five “persistently struggling” schools have one year to show improvement, the 20 “struggling” schools two years (see list of schools, p.2).

Schools that the Commissioner has determined “have made demonstrable progress” will “continue under district operation with the superintendent vested with the powers of a receiver.” Thus even those that show improvement can remain in receivership, as the Commissioner decides. Meeting the goals is not a guarantee the receivership ends — that is decided by the Commissioner. The Commissioner can also decide to remove the school from the receivership list, or appoint an independent receiver. Both the independent and superintendent receivers have the same powers. Given that Commissioner Elia handpicked Superintendent Cash, who did not even apply for the job, it is likely he will remain receiver for the 25 schools for a number of years. Further, it is likely he will use the powers he has been given, as one means to show improvement is the “Superintendent’s successful use of the powers of a School Receiver to implement the school’s plan.”

State Testing Main Means to Decide “Improvement”

A complicated system of “Level 1” metrics and “Level 2” metrics has been fabricated by the state. A statewide average of student test scores, from 2012-13 for math and English Language Arts (ELA), for “struggling” and “persistently struggling” schools, was established as a universal baseline. Then a list of “metrics” was decided by the state along with a formula for calculating “improvement.” No explanation or evidence has been provided as to why student test scores on Common Core state tests, which are invalid and not legitimate, should be the main means to decide “improvement.” It is simply asserted, as are the weights given the various “metrics.” For example testing scores far outweigh such issues as students passing courses and staff turnover. As well, once selected, the school is required to keep its list for three years.

For level 1, there are only seven “metrics,” and at least five have to be chosen. For elementary and middle schools, the majority of Buffalo receivership schools, six of the seven involve student test scores:

- Making Priority School Progress
- Percent of Students at or above level 2 in ELA test scores
- Percent of students at or above level 2 in math
- Mean Student Growth Percentile in ELA
- Mean Student Growth Percentile in Math
- Percent of students at or above level 3 in science

The seventh involves the school violence index, which involves students being written up or suspended for fighting, or insubordination, or similar activity. For the six testing-related issues, if the school is below the universal baseline, it is required to choose that “metric.”

For high schools, where the Common Core testing, which is to replace Regents exams, has not yet been imposed, the list is different, but still largely based on test scores:

- Making priority school progress
- 4-year graduation rate
- 5-year graduation rate
- Percent of students graduating with regents diploma and advanced designation
- Percent of 10th graders passing Math regents
- Percent of 11th graders passing ELA regents
- School Violence Index

Each item is equally weighted, with level 1 accounting for 50 points. So if five are chosen, each item equals 10 points. It is only possible to get a ten or a zero for each, with no points for partial improvements. Level 2 is also worth 50 points. The combined score must be 67 or higher to show “demonstrable improvement.” A score from 40-67 will mean the Commissioner decides if it is considered sufficient improvement. Below 40 is not.

Level 2 “metrics” involve a long list of more than 80 possible items, including students passing courses; college and career

Testing Does Not Raise Quality • 13

I • STATE TEST SCORES NOT VALID

grade.

It is known that the state determines the cut score (the score that marks a failing rate) *after* the tests have been graded, thus ensuring how many fail. As well answers are kept private so students, parents and teachers cannot use the tests for learning purposes — an important part of knowing what is needed to improve. Specific discussion about the content is prohibited and students have been suspended for raising

questions about the test questions and answers designed to trick students.

As many have said the testing regime is child abuse and invalid and should be outlawed. No doubt many thousands more will join in refusing the tests this year for these reasons. Yet, these test scores of students are a main means for determining school “failure” or “improvement.” They also do not take into account the large numbers of students with English as a second language,

who are forced to take the same test as those with English as their first language.

Most importantly state test scores in no way measure the quality of education, learning levels and abilities of students, the love and joy of learning and teaching shared collectively. They also provide no means to assess whether the quality of education is being raised and whether inequality is being lowered. These are the concerns of parents, teachers students and staff.

Commissioner Elia: It is “Unethical” for Educators to Support Parents Refusing State Tests

In New York State this past spring, some 20 percent of students refused to take the 2015 state-mandated Common Core standardized tests in math and English Language Arts (ELA), highlighting the growth of the *Refuse the Tests* movement around the country. That amounts to more than 225,000 students from grades 3 through 8, with some districts, like West Seneca, reporting more students refusing than sitting for the test.

Last April, Board of Regents Chancellor Merryl Tisch warned that school districts could lose funding — either by the federal government or the state — if enough students (95%) did not take the tests. When

about 5% of students refuse, the data secured from the tests cannot be used. Last week, New York Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia also threatened punishment of those who support students opting out of testing, calling them unethical for taking a stand in defense of the rights of students and parents.

Below we reprint a blog from Carol Burris, a retired Long Island principal who has played an important role in building the *Refuse the Tests* movement.

* * *

I have been called many things during my 62 years on this planet — some nice, some not so nice. Some of the not-so-nice

descriptors, such as “nerd” and more recently, “rebel,” I admit I have secretly liked. But I do not at all like the label that new Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia gave me — unethical.

I suppose Ms. Elia felt safe to speak her mind before Educators4Excellence (E4E), an astroturf group [fake grassroots organization commonly funded by billionaires] funded in great part by the Gates Foundation. E4E has made it clear that it thinks accountability testing is just swell. Or perhaps she believed that it is brave to come into a new state, without having the experience of giving or reviewing even one

Commissioner Elia Unethical • 11

8 • PARENT INVOLVEMENT LIMITED

to the fact that the CETs make only *recommendations*, not decisions: “The district shall establish a community engagement team which shall include stakeholders, including but not limited to the school principal, parents and guardians, teachers and other school staff and students. Membership of such teams may be modified at any time. Such teams shall develop recommendations for improvement of the school and shall solicit input through public engagement. The team shall present its recommendations periodically to the school leadership and, as applicable, the receiver,” (para 211-f, c-iii).

The Commissioner’s regulations repeat this content and state that the receiver has the final say in how people are chosen and removed. This is included as part of his powers to impose a community engagement plan, which is approved not by the community or members of the CET but by the Commissioner:

“The superintendent [who is the receiver] shall develop a community engagement plan...and submit such community engagement plan to the commissioner for approval,” (Commissioner’s Regulations 100.19, p.11, June 23, 2015). The plan has to include how stakeholders were consulted and “The way in which members of the community engagement team are selected,

the community engagement team’s membership is modified, or vacancies filled, provided that administrator, teacher and parent members of the CET must be selected through the process established in section 100.11b,” (p.12) This plan has not yet been done, though the CETs have been established. The 100.11 regulations, dating to 1994, call for administrators and teachers to be elected by their unions and parents selected by “school-related parent organizations.” They do not refer to how students or community members are selected, so for the CETs that is completely up to the receiver.

The Commissioner’s regulations also call for the plan — designed by the receiver and approved by the Commissioner, not the parents, teachers, students, staff and community members — to address: “The manner and extent of the expected involvement of all parties; the means by which the CET shall conduct meetings and formulate recommendations; the means by which the CET shall solicit public input; the means by which the CET shall make public its recommendations; the manner in which the CET shall coordinate its work with any school based management” team. None of this has been provided and nor is it being provided at the meetings so far held at the schools (these include Build Academy,

Burgard, Lafayette and West Hertel). This is true even though the Commissioner has demanded that the receiver, with CET input, is to have school plans in place by September 30. According to the Commissioner, the receiver’s plan for how the CETs are to function, the Community Engagement Plan, is also to be submitted by then.

Experience Shows Even Consultation Will Be Minimal

As well, repeated experience here in Buffalo has been that even the consultation, collaboration and what is called “shared-decision making” required in the 1994 regulations has not been taking place. This was evident in Dr. Orfield’s recent report on inequality for the federal Office of Civil Rights, for example, where he speaks to the need to change the parent involvement process and the lack of parent information, the complex process for participating, for applying to schools, etc. — issues parents have long demanded solutions for. Further, the DPCC has repeatedly put forward that the consultation required with parents on Title I funding, school plans and more has not been taking place. All of this is unjust and undemocratic and indicative of what can now be expected of the receiver. Indeed, given his powers, conditions will be far more undemocratic and dictatorial.

Picket Says: Hurricane Andrew Keep Out of Our Schools

Teachers, parents and people concerned about defending the right to education from Fredonia, Brockport and Buffalo organized a picket targeting Governor Cuomo for his attacks on public schools August 4. The call to *Refuse Receivership* was prominent. Governor Cuomo is responsible for the state takeover of 25 Buffalo public schools and 144 statewide using receivership — a term normally reserved for corporate bankruptcy, not public schools.

Receivership takes power from the public and elected governance and puts it in the hands of appointed individuals, the Education Commissioner at the state level and for now the superintendent at the local level. State takeover keeps parents, teachers and students from playing their rightful role to *decide* matters of education.

Participants targeted Cuomo as he is the one imposing this attack while refusing to fully fund the schools based on their needs. For Buffalo this includes at least funding to ensure music and physical education for *all*; an increase in

English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, translators and coaches as many schools now have large immigrant populations; and improving the working conditions of teachers, such as smaller classes, which are the learning conditions of students.

The picket occurred despite last minute changes to the time Cuomo was to arrive and then the announcement that he would not appear but Lieutenant Governor Hochul would. Given she is local and represents the governor, the picket proceeded. It also went forward as it is clear that receivership — with the superintendent's powers to fire *without cause* some or all teachers and staff at a given receivership



school, impose individual contracts that will decimate the district and greatly narrow curriculum — is an approaching hurricane. All those acting now are providing an early warning, as it is not wise to wait until it hits full force. As signs brought out, now is the time to organize and take actions to *REFUSE!* A rally for September 2, 3:30 at McKinley High School, on Elmwood, was promoted as one such action.

8 • COMMISSIONER ELIA UNETHICAL

cycle of testing, and denounce Opt Out and those who support it in front of the press.

As reported by Chalkbeat New York, Elia said:

“I think opt-out is something that is not reasonable. I am absolutely shocked if, and I don’t know that this happened, but if any educators supported and encouraged opt-outs, I think it’s unethical.”

Well, Ms. Elia, be shocked. I am turning myself in to your ethics squad. I absolutely encouraged the opt-out movement last year. I do not think I could have been clearer when I wrote this:

“There comes a time when rules must be broken — when adults, after exhausting all remedies, must be willing to break ranks and not comply. That time is now. The promise of a public school system, however imperfectly realized, is at risk of being destroyed. The future of our children is hanging from testing’s high stakes. The time to opt out is now.”

I will admit that I was quite nervous when I hit the send button on that blog. I had no idea whether or not my superintendent would discipline me, or if I would receive a threatening letter (or worse) from the State Education Department. But to not hit that send button — that would have felt unethical to me.

It would have been unethical to not speak out after watching New York’s achievement gaps grow, indicating that the tests and the standards on which they are based are not advancing the learning of the state’s most vulnerable kids.

It would have been unethical to ignore watching the frustration of my teachers whose young children were coming home from school discouraged and sick from the stress of test prep designed to prepare them for impossible tests.

It would have been unethical to not respond to the heartbreaking stories that I heard from friends who are elementary

principals — stories of children crying, becoming sick to their stomach, and pulling out hair during the Pearson-created Common Core tests.

And it would have been unethical to not push back against a system of teacher evaluation based on Grade 3-8 test scores that is not only demeaning and indefensible, but also incentivizes all the wrong values.

So if there is a place called Regents Jail, I guess that is where I will have to go.[...] Elia’s statement was a revealing and disturbing peek into the thinking and leadership of the new commissioner. Ms. Elia was fired in Hillsborough County, Florida, after a majority of the school board became disillusioned with her leadership. With her recent statement, she not only painted a lot of very principled educators with a rather harsh brush, she alienated the parents of over 225,000 children by characterizing their parental decision as “unreasonable.”

I • END U.S. WAR GAMES IN KOREA

are routine. The occupation of south Korea with close to 30,000 troops, repeated war games, threats and refusal to sign a peace treaty, these are all to be seen as normal and acceptable. The aim of destroying the DPRK, who has carried out no aggression, repeated provocations and violation of her sovereignty, all are said to be normal, rather than the source of instability and the war danger in the region.

The press release states:

“UFG is a routine and defense-oriented exercise designed to enhance CFC readiness, protect the region and maintain stability on the Korean peninsula. UFG is planned months in advance and it is not connected to any current world events. U.S. forces will join ROK military forces representing all services, and ROK government participants.

“There are seven United Nations Command Sending States scheduled to participate in UFG 2015, including Australia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. In addition, the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission will monitor the exercise to ensure it is in compliance with the Armistice Agreement.”

The press release here tries to keep up the fiction that the United Nations has somehow given its approval to this provocative war game. The U.S.-led UN Command was established during the Korean War and is but a fig leaf to legitimize U.S. aggression since the war began to the present. The press release continues:

“Through its Panmunjom mission, the United Nations Command Military

Armistice Commission has informed the North Korean People’s Army of the exercise dates and the non-provocative nature of this routine training.

“Routine training exercises are carried out in the spirit of the October 1, 1953, ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty and in accordance with the Armistice. These exercises also highlight the longstanding partnership, commitment and enduring friendship between the U.S. and ROK, and help to ensure stability and security on the peninsula.”

War games are meant for war, not peace. They serve instability and insecurity. The role of the U.S. in the region has been to launch aggressive war against the Koreans, using massive bombing raids to destroy the north and ruthless civilian massacres of millions of Koreans, north and south. The U.S then divided the country, building a wall to split Koreans while occupying the south for decades now. The brutality against the north then and now stemmed from her refusal to bow down to the U.S. and its dictate. Instead the north has charted its own course, contending with a U.S. blockade and numerous efforts at regime change.

One of the scars left by the Korean War is the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separates the two Koreas. The DMZ is said to contain as many as 1 million undetonated land mines dating back to the war. In early August, the south Korean military claimed that two of its soldiers were injured by land mines and made the unfounded accusation that the explosives had been deliberately planted by the north to injure the soldiers.

From there the south went on to fire shells across the DMZ claiming this was in retaliation for shelling from the north. Of course, when pressed to provide evidence, the U.S. and south Korean military has been unable to substantiate its accusations. It has now gone further by carrying out psychological warfare operations across the DMZ for the first time in 11 years, in violation of north-south agreements. These provocative actions have been going on in the midst of the war games.

Both the events at the DMZ and the DPRK’s legitimate objections to the war games are being misrepresented by the monopoly media, which refuses to provide full information, including the history of U.S. aggression and occupation. Instead the DPRK is made to appear to be the belligerent party, rather than the one that has been working for decades to uphold peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. These include calls for a nuclear-free zone for the region, supported by the DPRK but refused by the U.S. It includes proposals to sign a peace treaty and normalize relations, as well as proposals for the peaceful reunification of Korea, by the Koreans themselves. The U.S. systematically rejects all such efforts and maintains its troops and war games,

To oppose U.S. disinformation, we include in this issue (below) the letter sent by Ja Song Nam, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the DPRK to the United Nations, addressed to the President of the UN Security Council. The letter calls for the immediate convening of an emergency meeting of the Security Council to discuss

and take action against the massive U.S.-south Korean joint military exercise. We also include an international appeal from Koreans to support the signing of a peace treaty and peaceful reunification.

We demand that President Obama sign a peace treaty and *Bring All Troops Home Now!* We call on all concerned to join organizing efforts for an anti-war government and use upcoming elections for this purpose.



OPPOSING U.S. WAR GAMES

Letter from Democratic People's Republic of Korea to President of United Nations Security Council

Excellency,

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honor to bring to your attention the aggressive joint military exercise so-called "Ulji Freedom Guardian (UFG)" which is now being conducted by the United States in south Korea against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The U.S.-led joint military exercises including the "UFG," which are staged one after another every year on the Korean peninsula and beyond, are serious provocations as well as typical expressions of the U.S. hostile policy against the DPRK.

The U.S. is again attempting to cover up the aggressive and dangerous nature of such exercises by describing them as "annual" or "defensive" ones.

However, such real war-like military maneuvers, which mobilize massive armed forces with nuclear capacity with a purpose of occupying Pyongyang, capital of the DPRK, can neither be "defensive" nor justified as "routine" under the pretext of [being held on an] "annual basis."

The U.S. is forcing the DPRK into an arms race through ceaseless war drills and arms build-up in a sinister bid to throw obstacles in the way of the DPRK's efforts for economic development and the improvement of the people's standard of living. The U.S. is seeking an opportunity for a preemptive attack on the DPRK by making it inattentive to increased vicious

cycles of tensions.

The U.S. war games clearly prove that it is the U.S. which instigates the vicious cycles of escalating confrontation and tension and creates the danger of war on the Korean peninsula.

The U.S.-led aggressive and provocative large scale joint military exercises are no longer issues confined to the DPRK-U.S. or inter-Korean relations but an international issue which threatens the peace and security in Northeast Asia and beyond.

Therefore, I request that the issue of the U.S. joint military exercises be placed on the Security Council agenda, and that a meeting of the Security Council be urgently held in accordance with Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter of the United Nations.

I would like to remind that the Security Council has unjustifiably ignored the DPRK's several requests to place the issue of the U.S. joint military exercises on the agenda of the Security Council.

Should the Security Council again ignore the DPRK's just request to discuss the U.S. joint military exercises, it will expose itself as giving up its primary mission of maintaining international peace



and security and becoming a political tool of an individual power.

If the U.S. persistently opts for military confrontation despite the repeated warnings of the DPRK and the shared denunciation by the international community, it will be held wholly accountable for all the ensuing consequences.

The DPRK will not indefinitely wait for the U.S. to change its DPRK policy while seeing its sovereignty and security threatened, but will make all necessary steps to deter U.S. nuclear provocations.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.
(August 19, 2015)

8 • TESTING DOES NOT RAISE QUALITY

readiness; staff turnover; post-graduation plans for students; attendance; gaps between student groups; school climate; expanded learning time; testing indicators for "sub-groups," like English Language Learners.

For the first year a 1 percent increase over either the universal baseline, or the school's previous year's level is required. For year 2 it is 3 percent and year three a 6 percent increase is required.

It is also the case that many of the

schools in receivership have a high percentage of ELL and Special Needs students, making improvements on test scores next to impossible. These students take the same tests as students with English as their first language. For BEST, for example, 36% of its students are ELL and 17% special needs. For West Hertel it is 31% ELL and 16% special needs; Bilingual Center has 50% ELL and 24% special needs; Frank Sedita has 42% ELL and 21% special needs; Herman Badillo 52% ELL and 22% special

needs; International Prep 30 % ELL and 17% special needs; Riverside 34% ELL and 18% special needs; Waterfront 28% ELL and 19% special needs and Lafayette 70% ELL and 19% special needs (based on 2013 data, so figures for most are probably higher).

It is also notable that basic criteria for assessing student learning levels, such as their ability to apply knowledge to solving social problems and participating in changing the world, is nowhere to be found.

Appeal to the International Community for the Independent and Peaceful Reunification of Korea

The Asia-Pacific Regional Committee for Supporting Korea's Peaceful Reunification issued a statement earlier this year calling on all progressive humanity to step up support for the Korean people's struggle for the peaceful reunification of their divided country. Voice of Revolution calls on everyone to support this important appeal which will strengthen and advance the Korean people's movement for the peaceful reunification of their nation, divided by the U.S. in 1945. The success of this movement will not only contribute to peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, but will make a significant contribution to world peace by removing the danger of war on the Korean peninsula and ensuring political stability in the region. Since that time numerous actions have taken place worldwide. In Washington D.C August 15, a rally was held at the White House demanding the U.S. sign a peace treaty now. A conference was held to address the struggle for peaceful reunification and its contribution to peace (see photos below).

The appeal begins by noting that 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Korea from the brutal Japanese colonial rule at the end of the Second World War. The Korean people emerged from their victory with the aim of building a free, independent and prosperous country.

Following liberation, their aspirations were undermined and frustrated with the division of their country by outside forces. While the world has undergone great changes and advances, the Korean people have been stymied by the division of their beloved homeland, which continues to cause great hardship, not the least of which is the constant threat of war that hangs over their nation. The Appeal calls on all progressive humanity to inform themselves about the Korean movement for reunification, support their just struggle and render all and every assistance to ensure the success of this movement.

The authors of the Appeal note that in December 2014, they designated 2015 as the year of solidarity for "Supporting the Independent and Peaceful Reunification of Korea" — in particular the period from



June, marking the 15th anniversary of the historic June 15, 2000 North-South Joint Declaration to October and the 35th anniversary of the proposal to found the Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo.[1]

With a view to further expand and strengthen the international solidarity movement for Korea's peaceful reunification, the Appeal outlines a four-point program to galvanize support from international public opinion and all progressive and peace-loving peoples around the world.

1. To Organize an International Movement to Actively Support the Just Proposals for the Independent and Peaceful Reunification of Korea.

The appeal calls on progressive people to popularize the three principles of Korea's reunification (peacefully, independently and through great national unity), the 10-Point Program for the Great Unity of the Whole Nation [2] and the Proposal for Founding the Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo. These reflect the historic experience of the Korean people and their long struggle for national reunification and present-day realities.

Korean reunification on the basis of the three principles of independence, peace and national unity means that the project of Korean reunification belongs to the Korean people themselves, to be carried out peacefully and on the basis of their collective political unity.

The appeal highlights the importance of Korean reunification proceeding on the

basis of forming a federal state with two co-existing social and political systems in the north and south as they are, and working out ways and means of sorting out governance and other matters on a political, peaceful basis.

The appeal calls for everyone to create public opinion in favor of Korean reunification on the basis of these principles.

2. The Necessity to Create a Peaceful Environment as a Pre-Requisite to Reunification

The Appeal highlights that the precondition for success in the Korean reunification movement is a peaceful environment conducive to easing tensions and promoting dialogue. The annual war games and exercises carried out in and around Korea by the U.S. and south Korea are a block to normalizing relations between north and south. The Appeal calls on international public opinion to end these war games and for the U.S. to respond positively to the call for "a durable peace mechanism" on the Korean peninsula.

The Appeal calls for an end to all forms of sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the ongoing provocations about "human rights" which escalate the possibility of war on the Korean peninsula.

On the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the launching of the Korean War, a month of activities to mark the struggle against U.S. interference in the region is proposed — from June 25, the date of the start of the Korean War in 1950 to

July 27, the date of the Korean Armistice Agreement in 1953. The Appeal calls for an international campaign to involve the United Nations and all countries to “improve DPRK-U.S. relations.” Numerous actions in various countries occurred.

3. To Conduct All-Sided Activities to Implement the Joint Declarations of 2000 and 2007

The Appeal includes a call for the implementation of the June 15, 2000 North South Joint Declaration and the October 4, 2007 Declaration signed by the heads of state of the DPRK and the Republic of Korea, which improved bilateral relations between north and south Korea and gave impetus to the reunification movement. These historic agreements have been trampled in the mud by the south Korean government and the Appeal calls for worldwide public campaigns on the anniversary of these declarations to popularize their contents and to call for their implementation. It calls on everyone within and outside Korea to thwart attempts by the south Korean regime to worsen north-south relations with calls for confrontation and reunification by regime change in the north.

4. To Build the Movement to Support the Independent and Peaceful Reunification of Korea

The Appeal calls for a global campaign based on the unity of progressive people and people of conscience to support the Korean reunification movement. The Appeal calls for progressive political parties, NGOs, political personalities, peace organizations, academics, lawyers and members of the cultural community — all those who value freedom and equality, justice and peace, and who want a world free of aggression and war — to stand with the Korean people for the reunification of their divided homeland, which is a movement for peace on the Korean peninsula and the world.

The Appeal ends by affirming that the Korean people will be victorious in their struggle for national reunification and once again calls on all the justice, freedom, and peace-loving people of the world to fully extend their “support and solidarity to the



cause of the independent and peaceful reunification of Korea, for the building of a new world, free and prosperous, and the happiness of humanity.”

Notes

1. The Proposal for the Founding of the Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo was put forward by President Kim Il Sung, the founder and leader of the DPRK, on October 10, 1980 as a means of achieving peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula on the basis of a confederal political arrangement where the north and south of the country would

co-exist, each with their own political systems and economic systems, while they worked out together how they would conduct bicameral relations, social policy and other matters for the common good of the entire Korean people and work toward the common goal of building one united and prosperous Korea.

2. The 10-Point Program for the Great Unity of the Whole Nation was issued by President Kim Il Sung on April 8, 1993. It is a further elaboration of the principles set forth for the creating of the Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo and strengthening the movement for reunification.

REFUSE RECEIVERSHIP RALLY

SEPTEMBER 2, 3:30PM

MCKINLEY HIGH SCHOOL ON ELMWOOD

RECEIVERSHIP IS STATE TAKEOVER OF 25 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The state has said that barriers to improving schools are:

- *Governance, meaning school boards and democracy*
 - *Collective Bargaining Agreements*
 - *School Leadership and Staffing*
 - *Parent and Community Engagement*

None of these are barriers! Removing them, the intent of receivership, means parents have even less control. We say enhance and expand democracy so teachers, parents and students together decide.

**WHY REFUSE RECEIVERSHIP?
BECAUSE WE THE PEOPLE OF BUFFALO LOSE:**

- *Schools and their traditions*
- *Teachers of color and face the firing of more teachers without cause, including potentially the entire staff of receivership schools*
- *music, arts, sports, history, social studies, libraries*

Receivership means power is in the hands of the receiver and state who can divide our district and privatize our public schools using public funds.

Our Schools, Our Rights, We Decide!

HOW TO REFUSE RECEIVERSHIP

Join Organizing efforts and attend rallies, forums, school-based actions:

- *Refuse firing of teachers and staff without cause*
- *Refuse separate "receiver agreements" for each school*
- *Refuse testing so schools cannot be labeled "failing"*
- *Demand Buffalo City Charter calling for elected governance be upheld*
- *"Refuse Days" at receivership schools*

