

**MARCH 2015**

# LOCAL DO'S

## **NYSUT "COMMITTEE OF 100" LOBBY DAY**

**BY CAROLYN CONDENZIO,  
GRAND AVE, LOCAL DO'S STAFF**

March 2-3<sup>rd</sup> marked the annual "Committee of 100" NYSUT lobbying day in Albany. I was able to attend and represent BMUST this year for this important day. Approximately 700 NYSUT members gathered in Albany, where they held a rally on the staircase in the Capitol building. We were told later that Governor Cuomo, upon hearing the chanting of hundreds of NYSUT members, said he could hear the gathering from his office, and to him that meant he knew he was "doing the right thing."



On day two, NYSUT brought us by charter bus to the Legislative Office Building, where we met with smaller groups of NYSUT members who shared the same legislative district. Our group had three scheduled appointments, with Assemblyman Saladino, Assemblyman McDonough, and Senator Venditto. The meetings generated candid discussions about Cuomo's plans for APPR,



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KENNEDY HS- BRIAN DEGAETANO  
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MEPHAM HS- BILL MORRIS  
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funding, the GEA, and the tax cap. Although the legislators generally agreed that Cuomo is misguided in his approach for evaluating teachers based on test scores, their focus seemed to be directed at eliminating the GEA and the supermajority (60%) needed to pierce the tax cap. Overall, I believe our message was received loud and clear. The question remains whether or not the Senate, in particular, will reject Cuomo's proposals. After the meetings, I was treated to a tour of the Capitol by Assemblyman McDonough, along with an introduction on the Assembly floor at the start of their proceedings. It was a great way to wrap up an important mission of letting our legislators know, in person, just how essential they are as advocates of public education and properly funded schools.



**NYS Assemblyman McDonough and  
Carolyn Condenzio (Grand Ave)**

*“Although the legislators generally agreed that Cuomo is misguided in his approach for evaluating teachers based on test scores, their focus seemed to be directed at eliminating the GEA and the supermajority (60%) needed to pierce the tax cap.”*



## **I keep thinking about Wisconsin**

and the devastation Governor Walker has inflicted on our union brothers and sisters and I'm worried. I worry because he will probably run for President and attempt to spread his anti-union rhetoric all around the country. I also worry because he has his clone running the Executive Branch in Albany. The déjà vu I'm experiencing I hope is felt by every NYSUT member around the state and every BMUST member here in our local. Our dear governor may make his own attempt to reach the Oval Office. Truly frightening!

I hope nobody needs to be reminded that our governor's education agenda is misguided and will be detrimental to our schools while benefiting his billionaire hedge fund friends. The schools Cuomo highlights as "failing" have two things in common... poverty and inadequate funding. He continues to hold districts and our students' hostage by linking funding

Island (supported by Campbell Brown and her cronies) which attacked tenure has recently been given the green light to proceed. He is attempting to take away local control and our collective bargaining rights by mandating catastrophic changes to APPR plans that were negotiated statewide.

He wants control because NYS APPR plans (which he touted as being among the best and strongest in the country) did not result in enough "developing" or "ineffective" teachers to satisfy him or his friends who are attacking us. Everyone should be concerned about a Constitutional Convention in a couple of years. That's where Cuomo and legislators



**Mark Steinberg,**  
**President, BMUST**

**“So what have you done to fight back against Cuomo’s ill-advised agenda? Collectively, NYSUT members have run education forums, put up billboards, put out print ads and commercials, participated in rallies, and sent thousands of faxes and texts. Some have chosen to call the governor’s office (1-518-474-8390) directly to express their displeasure.”**

to his untested education reforms and its increased emphasis on standardized testing. Having 50% of a teacher's APPR score derived from a standardized test could only result in more teaching to the test. Private school voucher tax credits and an increase in the number of charter schools will siphon more funds from public schools in a time where we are coping with the 2% tax cap. Cuomo is being very transparent. His goal is to dismantle public education, increase privatization, and take down NYSUT (US!) We didn't support him in the last election. He's an unhappy camper!

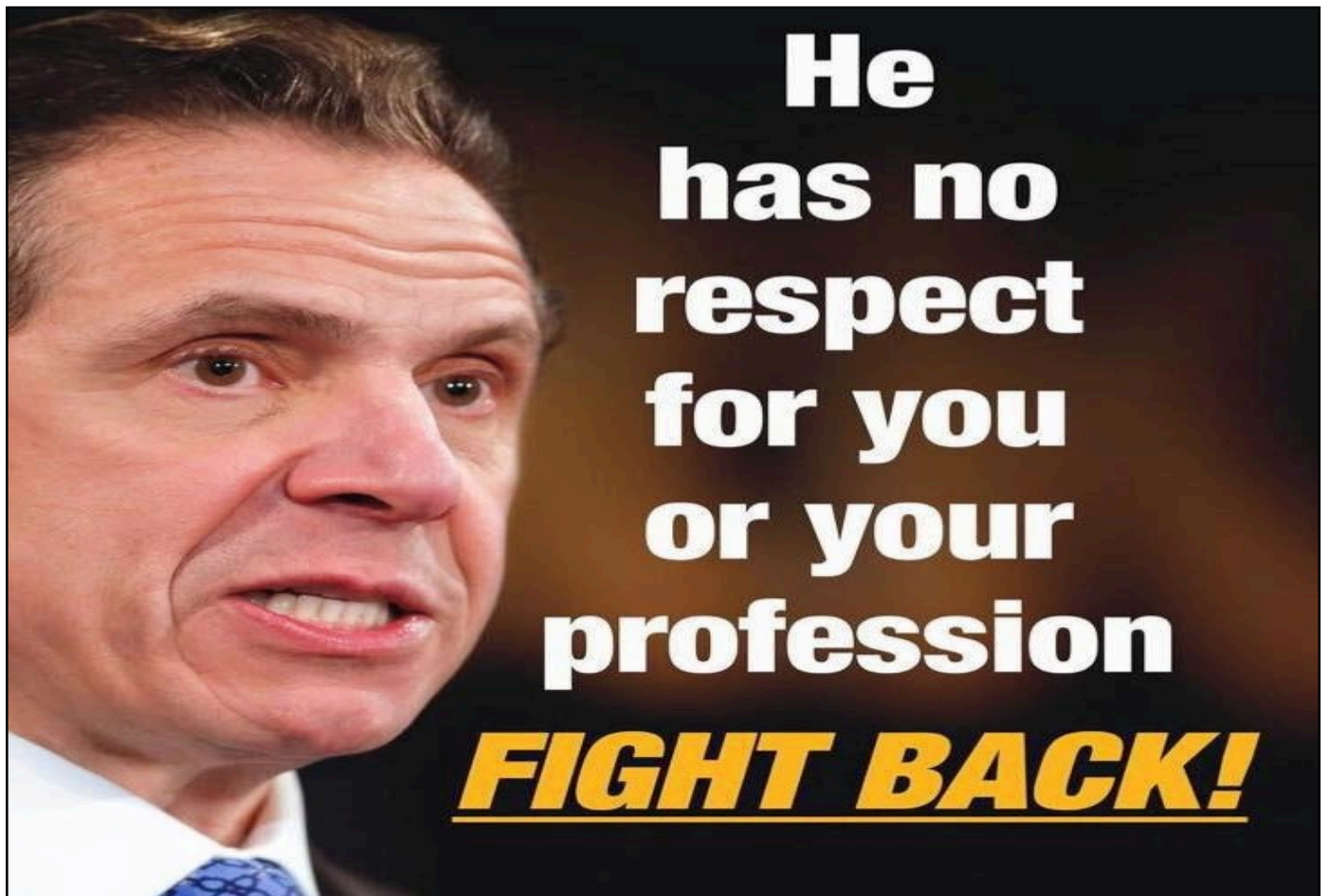
Cuomo is trying to wreak the same havoc on public unions that Walker did in Wisconsin. He continues to attack our due process rights afforded with tenure. A case NYSUT tried to stop out of Staten

of the same ilk can really come after us and other public unions.

So what have you done to fight back against Cuomo's ill-advised agenda? Collectively, NYSUT members have run education forums, put up billboards, put out print ads and commercials, participated in rallies, and sent thousands of faxes and texts. Some have chosen to call the governor's office (1-518-474-8390) directly to express their displeasure. Some have met with or called their State Senator and Assembly person to encourage them to reject Cuomo's anti-public school education agenda. Some have filled out post cards to be sent to the legislators as they negotiate the state budget. Some progress is being made, but more must be done.



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Cuomo says:

- Our schools are falling behind ...
- The state must take over "failing" schools ...
- Reduce over-testing ...
- The state must take control of teacher evaluations ...
- It's so easy for teachers to get tenure ...
- It's impossible to get rid of bad teachers ...
- The charter cap must be lifted ...
- "Competition" will build up public higher education ...
- We need an education tax credit ...

*It's crunch time! So, what have you done?*

*Mark*



## COMMON CORE PREP IN PRE-K

BY BILL MORRIS, (MEPHAM H.S.), LOCAL DO'S WRITER

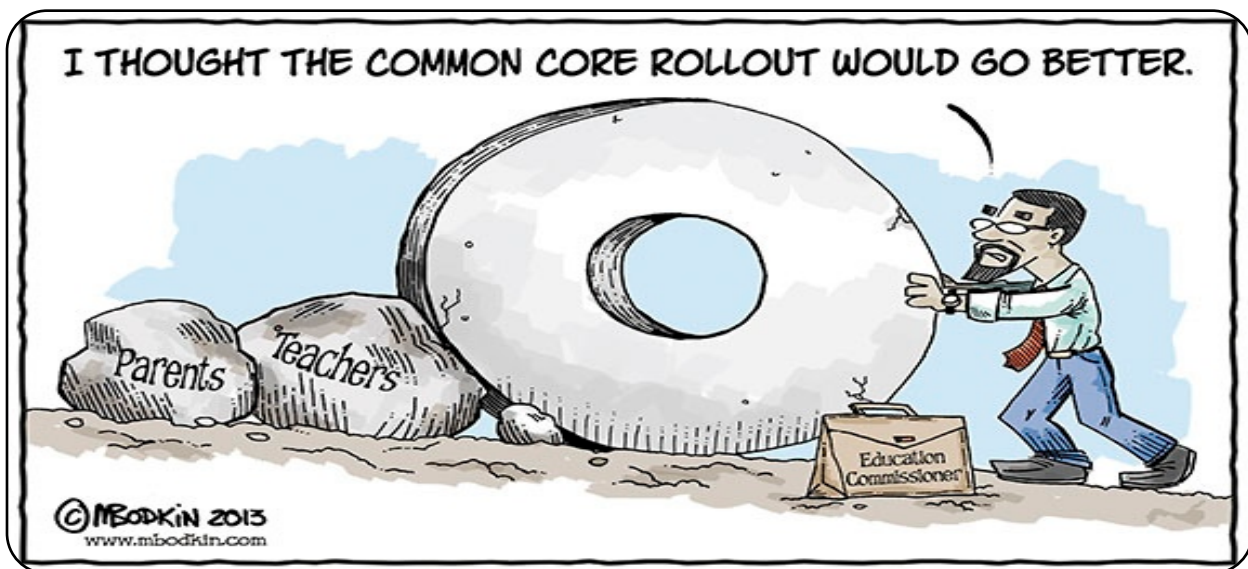
We want our children to love school and learning. At this point, as a faculty, we have children in various states of mind when it comes to school. My wife, Jaclyn, and I have a four-year-old, Olivia Grace, who loves Pre-K. She is already bringing home sample Common Core readings in preparation for the 3rd grade exam from Patchogue-Medford schools, which is a "refuse the test" supporting district, by the way. We recently completed a close-reading together (that I read to her) on Lincoln's motivation to become President. It was a challenging piece for an 8-year-old - let alone a toddler- but Olivia was engaged and understood it. She answered the open-ended questions well, supplying simple "evidence." I admit it was exciting for me to go through the experience with her. At this point, I am feeling confident that Olivia will likely be able to do well on the 3rd grade ELA exam, but to what end?

How will this assessment help my child, her teachers or our school?

The test will be taken and immediately be used to "evaluate" her teacher, her principal, and the school. Neither the teacher nor Olivia will see the exam again in order to use the test in any meaningful way. If Olivia does poorly for any reason, her teacher and school - not her- will have done a "bad job." If she scores highly, perhaps a 4, and she earns a 1, 2, 3 or even a 4 again the following year, she will "not have shown improvement" and the results will reflect negatively upon her school. How can I support such a flawed and meaningless system that is meant to harm great teachers and great schools?



The English Department recently completed the January Common Core English exam. I am proud to report that I answered three reading comprehension questions incorrectly. It was a reading by Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow on the development of Cosmology and Physics theory. Just imagine your 10R students taking this test next year. Sure, *The Theory of Everything* is a fine film....still it was the consensus in our meeting that the content was way outside of our students' realm of perspective: Cosmology, *really??* Additionally, it was also clear that several of the answers were ambiguous, so most of us "flipped a coin" in our minds and circled an answer. Is this the test and the system that should be used to "evaluate" my colleagues, my students and my school next year? Not a chance; and that is why it is my goal to help "refuse" this system out of existence before my daughter is asked to sit for these exams in a few years."



## CALHOUN H.S.: CHARITY IN ACTION!

BY WENDY SIMSON, (CALHOUN H.S.), LOCAL DO'S WRITER

**Calhoun has long been the epitome of volunteerism.** This year the Calhoun community has surpassed expectations by becoming involved with a plethora of organizations. Students and teachers alike have put others in place of themselves. And recently, Calhoun was asked to participate in the Wipe Out Challenge for Cancer. This successful Challenge went viral on YouTube and Twitter!



In addition, on Saint Patrick's Day, Calhoun H.S. held its annual St. Baldrick's event. Whether it was donating time, hair, ponytails, or money, all people involved had a great time raising money for children's cancer research. Calhoun has raised an impressive \$500,000 in 9 years! While the final tally from this year's event is still being tabulated, it is certain that Calhoun raised at least \$35,000 as a result of on-line donations. A big thank you to all who participated, especially Pete Magnuson, Joe Bianca, and Alana Baard. Their help in organizing the event was truly amazing!!!

In just a month, the Relay for Life event at Calhoun will take place. The date is April 24-25, 6pm-6am. You are encouraged to join us on this special night. Below please find the link to register, form a team, and make a donation:

[http://main.acsevents.org/site/TR/RelayForLife/RFLCY15EA?pg=entry&fr\\_id=69085](http://main.acsevents.org/site/TR/RelayForLife/RFLCY15EA?pg=entry&fr_id=69085)

Calhoun has broken the \$30,000 mark and is really excited at the number of people who will be participating in this first time event. So far there are over 40 teams and 300 participants! The pinnacle of the evening is by far the Luminaria Ceremony. It is a time to celebrate survivors, grieve for those we have lost, to reflect on our own or loved one's cancer experience, and to find hope that tomorrow holds the promise of a cancer-free world. Luminaria bags are to be dedicated to a person in your life that has been affected by cancer and can be decorated any way you like. The event will showcase all of the phenomenal Luminaria Bags that have been created! If you would like a bag, please email Wendy Simson at [wsimson@bmchsd.org](mailto:wsimson@bmchsd.org) Luminaria Bags can be decorated and returned to Wendy Simson via interoffice mail with a \$10 suggested donation to the American Cancer Society.



## “STATE OF AFFAIRS”

BY JOE AMADOR, (MAMS), LOCAL DO'S WRITER

### MAMS' BMUST Representatives held a union

**meeting** in January to discuss the many ongoing actions in response to Governor Cuomo's recent attack on public education. Make no mistake about it, we are at war with the governor, whose main “Affair” for 2015 and beyond is to destroy this “State's” public school system as we know it. We had a similar meeting at the beginning of the same month to inform us of what was at stake and what we could start doing to combat Governor Cuomo's agenda.

Going into the second meeting, I reflected on what I had done thus far and felt pretty good about it. Up to this point, I signed up for text message alerts from NYSUT, downloaded the NYSUT app on my phone, and signed letters through NYSTUs political action page. Downloading the app was one of the best things that I did, because I received an alert yesterday to take action and call my local state representative. I have to admit; normally I would have pushed things like this aside, thinking that someone else would pick up the slack. Well, I made that phone call to Senator Venditto's office yesterday (NYSUT made it easy, they even gave me a script to follow, for crying out loud!). I spoke with one of Michael Venditto's PR people, his name was John and after I introduced myself, before I even got to my talking points, he said “*you're calling about education right?*” With all of the pride in the world, I emphatically said YES, I AM! I spent about twenty minutes on the phone with him talking about things that I didn't even know I had in me regarding Governor Cuomo's “State” of delusion over trying to fix public education in New York.



After I hung up the phone, the beginning of my conversation with Senator Venditto's office replayed itself over and over again in my head. Senator Venditto's office knew that I was calling about education before I even explained why I had called. That told me something ... It told me that others had called that day, others are making their voices heard, others are starting to fight back and take a stand. It was a great feeling to know that others were in my corner fighting back alongside me. It also told me that we need to stay the course, continue the fight, continue to be heard, and take real action. It also made me wonder; what would happen if every member of NYSUT called their local representatives about these issues? What would happen if we took the next step and all called the Governor's office? The only way that we can effect change is by being a part of the movement, putting ourselves out there, and taking action.

I realized something as I prepared to attend our MAMS Union Meeting on January 28<sup>th</sup> ... I shouldn't feel happy about what I have done so far, because it isn't enough. I should be asking myself, and we should all be asking ourselves, what else can we do? The “State of Affairs” here at Merrick Avenue is one of activism! What is your “State of Affairs” when it comes to these issues and what else can you do to change Governor Cuomo's “State of Affairs”? I look forward to other opportunities for action with a new purpose of activism and optimism in our fight for Public Education. For the sake of our children, families, livelihoods and all the things that we hold so dear, I hope that we all do!

In Solidarity,

**Joe Amador**

Merrick Avenue Middle School



## M.A.P. HAPPENINGS

BY LAURA SHERIDAN, (M.A.P.), LOCAL DO'S WRITER

**MAP's biggest recent news** is the successful hosting of this year's spring conference for LIAEA (Long Island Alternative Education Association). On Saturday, March 7, faculty and administration from Nassau BOCES, Oceanside High School Castleton, Roslyn Hilltop Academy, The Three Village Academy, The Uniondale Alternative High School, and William Floyd Fusion Academy joined the MAP faculty for workshops on alternative education. Robert Eichorn, president of the National Alternative Education Association, flew in from Virginia for the morning to address the teachers and administrators. Thanks again to Rich Perry of Calhoun and Martha DiGiovanna for hosting workshops! MAP's biggest recent news is the successful hosting of this year's spring conference for LIAEA (Long Island Alternative Education Association). On Saturday, March 7, faculty and administration from Nassau BOCES, Oceanside High School Castleton, Roslyn Hilltop Academy, The Three Village Academy, The Uniondale Alternative High School, and William Floyd Fusion Academy joined the MAP faculty for workshops on alternative education. Robert Eichorn, president of the National Alternative Education Association, flew in from Virginia for the morning to address the teachers and administrators. Thanks again to Rich Perry of Calhoun and Martha DiGiovanna for hosting workshops!



Mary Sweeney's Science classes have been volunteering with The Center for Biodiversity and Conservation at the American Museum of Natural History. As part of a crowdsourcing effort, the students are helping "to identify and recognize individual [sea turtles]. . . . Once all image pairs have been matched, the results will be compared to two other methods: a purely automated process based on computer vision and machine learning algorithms as well as a hybrid method involving both human input and computer algorithms" ([www.amnh.org/our-research/center-for-biodiversity-conservation/research/turtle-identification](http://www.amnh.org/our-research/center-for-biodiversity-conservation/research/turtle-identification)). Congratulations, Ms. Sweeney, for spearheading this unique learning opportunity!



**Congratulations to  
Geisha Kwiatkowski,  
this year's MAP  
Honoree at the PTA  
Founder's Day  
Dinner!**



## KENNEDY TEACHERS COMPETE IN DANCING WITH THE TEACHERS



On March 10, several Kennedy H.S. teachers responded to the Student Government's challenge to raise funds for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Foundation by participating in Dancing With The Teachers. Brad Seidman coordinated the complex event by soliciting and supervising many student volunteers in the planning and execution of this successful event. The teachers learned a wide variety of dance steps, including the Cha Cha, the Charleston, and the Quick Step at various dance studios in Nassau County. Kennedy teachers also staffed the event by acting as judges of the competition. This year's award went to Kerri Andree (Science Department). Congratulations Kerri, and thank you to all teacher-contestants for giving it your all.



## ***FINANCIAL RESOURCES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS***

*NYSUT Member Benefits is excited to launch its newly created online Financial Planning Center to assist NYSUT members & their families with making a variety of important financial decisions.*



Whether you have questions about retirement planning, saving for college or considering purchasing a home, the Financial Planning Center offers valuable tools & resources to assist you. Take the time to check out everything this new section of our website has to offer and remember to bookmark it as we will continue to offer new items on a regular basis.

**This unique resource provides  
NYSUT members with free access to the following:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Financial calculators</li><li>• An interactive planning module</li><li>• Customized Kiplinger's retirement newsletter</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kiplinger's Annual Retirement Guide</li><li>• 403(b) Field Guide</li><li>• Preventive Law Guides</li><li>• And more to come</li></ul> |
|---|---|

**To access the NYSUT Member Benefits Financial Planning Center, visit the Member Benefits website at [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) and click on "Financial Planning Center."**