

An Education Plan By the People, For the People

The education policies currently in place under the current administration's leadership have stripped us of local democratic control of our schools and put it into the hands of private interests and bureaucrats.

Common Core State Standards, high stakes testing, financial aid cuts, tax caps and the like were contrived to set up our schools to fail and justify corporate privatized charter schools which are proliferating across the state.

Children and teachers all over New York are being hurt by the one-size-fits-all curriculum/standards and the punitive testing regime inflicted on them by the Governor's policies. The children of our state are being groomed to meet the specifications of "College and Career Readiness" as defined by private and political interest groups. In collaboration with educators and experts across New York State, I put forth this education plan that enables parents, teachers and school boards of every community to take back local control of their schools.

These policies and strategies are designed to ensure that every child has access to an authentic student-centered education which accounts for individual learning styles and preferences.

Our children deserve an education that provides them with the skills and knowledge to pursue a career of their own choosing and to become engaged citizens with the power to control their own futures.

Plan Points:

1. Repeal the Common Core Learning Standards

The Common Core is an attempt to impose an unproven set of standards and curriculum without the input from parents, teachers and experts in the field of education and child development. According to educational experts, it is of poor quality and often developmentally inappropriate. It is costing taxpayers billions of dollars to implement these "standards" while confusing and frustrating our students, teachers and parents.

Replace Common Core with standards created by teachers and educational experts that:

Offer differentiated and challenging learning for all students.

Provide Art, Music, Gym, Social Studies and Science for every child.

Put a halt to all new teacher certification tests aligned with Common Core and reinstate the former ones. This will allow for new teachers to enter into the profession trained in research based teaching methodologies.

2. End High Stakes Testing

Studies show that high stakes testing does not improve learning but is actually detrimental to students, teachers and communities. It narrows the curriculum, promotes test prep, and takes time and resources away from authentic learning.

When test scores are linked to teacher evaluation, student promotion/placement, and school funding, the scores(data points) become more important than developing a well-rounded human being.

Taxpayers are forking over billions of dollars to testing companies to create the illusion that our schools are failing in order to sell us the solutions via more Common Core aligned goods and services. Even worse, public schools are taken over by for-profit charters funded by our tax dollars. Politicians in Albany do not have the right to tell our local school boards how to evaluate our students and teachers. Let our principals and superintendents do their jobs without government interference. We need to support our teachers and their right to due process which enables them to speak out for their students without fear of retribution.

3. Protect Against Privatization

Charter schools operate with no oversight using taxpayer money, at the expense of our public schools. I would immediately lower the cap on charter schools, end the practice of free rent provided to for-profit charters and protect against the diversion of state funds to private schools through vouchers or back-door tax credits.

4. Full Equal Funding for Public Education

Race to the Top turned financial funding of schools into a competition instead of basing it on need. It deprived struggling schools in high poverty areas of desperately needed resources, leaving them easy targets for privatization schemes.

Our state is the one of the most unequal states in the country when it comes to school funding. New York spends almost \$9,000 less per student in poor districts than it does on wealthier ones.

All New Yorkers, regardless of zip code, have the right to demand the best public schools in the nation that offer small class sizes, arts, and physical education for every child. The funding gap between poor and wealthy districts has significantly widened under Governor Cuomo's policies. I would enact policies that fully fund public schools with an equitable state aid formula.

5. Empower Local Communities and Parents

Local communities need to take back local control of education and funding.

Since 2010, Governor Cuomo has been borrowing from the school financial aid fund to fill in gaps in the state budget, leaving school aid well below mandated levels. This policy is called the Gap Elimination Adjustment and I would eliminate it immediately to provide the much needed funding for our schools. I would eliminate the state-mandated tax cap, as well as the requirement of a 60% supermajority, giving local voters the right to control their own school budgets.

6. Parental Rights to Protect Student Privacy

In 2011, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) was gutted to allow third party vendors access to student data.

The original FERPA laws need to be reinstated. All personally identifiable student data will remain at the local school district level. Any sharing or collecting of the is data will require parental consent. School districts will provide the community its privacy policy and what data is being shared or collected in all regional, state, and federal databases. All third party software vendors that collect personally identifiable information will require parental consent.

7. Board of Regents Accountability

The New York Board of Regents is responsible for setting all educational policy in the state. There are 13 positions, one for each regional district, and they are appointed by the state legislature. In order to give more control back to local communities, the regents should be elected by the people in each of the 13 districts. This would make the Board more accountable to the people and less beholden to state officials and politics, putting the focus back on children, where it belongs.

"I REST MY CASE" - Michael McDermott, Libertarian for Governor