

Good afternoon

Don't start the clock yet.

Thank you for allowing me to share some thoughts regarding the Common Core. My name is Ken Levy.

OK, click that button if you have to, but I'd love it if you could wait until I give credence to my words.

- Presently I am an educational consultant.
- I am a former teacher at Jefferson Elementary and Isaac E. Young Middle Schools in New Rochelle,
- a former House Director/Principal and administrator for special education at Fox Lane Middle School in Bedford,
- a former principal of Peekskill Middle School in Peekskill,
- a former principal of Brookside Elementary School in Yorktown,
- a former principal and the creator of Crompond Elementary/Intermediate School in Yorktown, also at the time known as the WE School where there was no you, me, or them; were there was only WE, us, and ours.
- a former interim principal of Cherry Lane Elementary School in the Ramapo Central School District,
- a former interim assistant principal at William B. Ward Elementary School in New Rochelle.
- WOW, I have trouble holding a job!
- In Peekskill we were recognized by the state for improving math scores;
- while at Brookside in Yorktown we were recognized for closing the gap between General Education, Special education and ELL students two years in a row;
- in our third year as an intermediate school in Yorktown we were New York State's number one candidate in the National Green Ribbon School Program and were one of 62 national recipients. This award relates to STEM and environmental progress;
- after completing my year at Cherry Lane Elementary School we were named a NYS Reward School.
- I have made presentations on Inclusion,
- At an International Learning Styles Network Conference I was a member of a team presenting on RtI
- I facilitate workshops for PNWBOCES on School Leadership (culture, climate, preparing staff for APPR)
- I have been a presenter at the NYS Association of School Psychologists annual convention. I have also been published in their journal.
- While presenting I was always greeted enthusiastically and on every stop on my most important journey, working with children, staff, and parents the children were always greeted with a wonderful atmosphere and increased success.

Time permitting I would have mentioned some of the highlights from my administrative career; now let me tell you about a low point.

As a new sixth grade teacher at IEY Middle School in New Rochelle I was asked to prepare the children for and see that they passed the NYS Reading and Social Studies Tests. The children in my reading section were all below grade level.

I worked hard with my reading section. We practiced the test. We charted our growth in taking the test. I taught them strategies to take the test. I did everything but teach them how to read, think, and comprehend. In the end I was applauded due to the fact that every one of my children was at or above the state reference point. Pretty good! No, not good at all. I taught my children how to take and pass a test on a particular day and time. Because they all passed four or five of them did not get the help they really needed the next year. I realized that I had failed those children and promised not to let it happen again. I'm afraid we are failing too many children today.

We are missing the boat. I believe there is hardly a teacher or parent who does not believe in rigor. The issue before us is formulating and implementing this rigor without placing a heavy price tag on our children and all of the stakeholders invested in the social, emotional, and academic growth of our children.

We cannot forget that six, seven, and eight year olds are still learning what it means to be in school. Let's teach that concept with rigor and then see how high our children will fly. In its wisdom NYS has created DASA and asked educators to facilitate character education. Let's not negate these important decisions by spending numerous hours teaching to a test that may or may not be developmentally appropriate for every child. Teachers must have the time to build the box around each child; they cannot be crammed into one pre-fitted box. One size does not fit all.

Two weeks ago I attended the workshop of the Common Core Task Force at the College of New Rochelle. After returning home from my seat in the balcony I sent them some of my thoughts. In part I related...

- the words culture and climate (plus words suggesting culture and climate) were used quite often. It appeared to me that these words were used as often, if not more often than the words common core.
  - ✓ "Culture promotes teamwork..."
  - ✓ "We have a culture of trusting..."
  - ✓ "Level of support that I enjoy may not be the same throughout the state..."
  - ✓ "It's about trust not an 'I got you game...'"
  - ✓ "Learning has to be fun..."
  - ✓ "It's the overall culture that gets it done..."
  - ✓ "Kids need to want to come to school..."
- at times the interaction between Task Force and presenters appeared confrontational.
  - ✓ Voices became louder.

I continued by offering some suggestions for that type of meeting.

I also suggested...

- starting each session with some of the following words...
  - ✓ Our goal today is to collect input, not to judge it.
  - ✓ We are all on the same team with the same overarching goal of improving education in NYS.
  - ✓ We want all of our children to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.
  - ✓ This is not about confrontation; this is about moving forward and creating the best environment and curriculum for our children. We want our children to discover their talents and grow into fulfilled individuals who are great assets to our society and the world.
  - ✓ Questions that we ask of the presenters are not meant to judge their presentation or point of view; all of the questions that we ask are only meant to clarify our understanding.
- stick to questions that do create greater understanding.
- take the time to discuss culture and climate.

One of the final paragraphs in this document proposing help ended with the words

As you read my next statement please understand that I was and am humbled with the awesome responsibility placed in my hands every day that I crossed/cross the threshold of my school. As someone who has facilitated workshops on culture and climate and as someone who has been successful acting as a change agent and facilitating the growth of more positive cultures and climates in a variety of schools and districts you should consider me as a consultant to or member of your committee.

Final thought – The overwhelming majority of teachers I have collaborated with were touched by a higher power to work with children. They were born to teach, and their ability to reach children and move them forward cannot be measured by one or two tests. I've seen teachers work with children and parents for months just to see that the child attends school on a regular basis. Now that's growth and the mark of a highly effective educator.

THANK YOU!!!

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