

Elizabeth Lynch

I retired in June after a 26 year career in public education. I am currently a doctoral candidate and as a result of six years of ongoing research for my dissertation, I am well aware of the origin and history of the education “reform” initiatives, as well as the players and their agendas. And my concern takes on a very personal meaning because I am fighting for the education of my four grandchildren.

It’s time to stop pretending that the dismantling of public education for profit is for the betterment of education or for the benefit of children. It is only for the benefit of the profiteers’ bank accounts and children are becoming the collateral damage of their greed.

Twenty years ago David Berliner and Bruce Biddle published their book, *The Manufactured Crisis*, and laid out in detail how data was being manipulated to create a perception of the failure of public education in order to justify privatization. I mention their book because they include a powerful quote from 1770, when John Adams stated, “Facts are stubborn things, and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.”

Rather than repeat what you already know and what others are sharing here today about why current education policies are harming children in this state, I will provide some facts that the governor’s wishes, inclinations and dictates cannot alter:

Fact: The parents, grandparents, and educators of this state do not want to hear lip service. We don’t want empty promises and we don’t want any more lies, which by the way, violate the NYS Code of Ethics for Educators, Principle 5. The members of the Task Force might want to look that up.

Fact: We do not negotiate with our children’s futures. We do not compromise when children are hurting because of policies grounded in corporate and political greed.

Fact: We do NOT want to see the Common Core Standards tweaked, re-named, or rebranded as other states have done. We want them gone. Period. If this Task Force is not sure why, its members need to listen harder.

Fact: Nothing less than a total shift in policy, including the decoupling of high stakes tests from teacher evaluations, is acceptable. Children’s education should not be about supplying data to evaluate their teachers, schools, or districts. And telling children the tests don’t count for them while these same tests have the power to destroy teachers’ careers is nothing short of a set-up for failure.

Fact: Last year NYS saw over 200,000 refusals for the Grade 3-8 Common Core tests. We are aware that Ms. Elia has provided a tool kit to superintendents to turn back the growing opt out movement. It will not work. It won’t work because parents will not be placated, threatened, or coerced into cooperating with policies that harm their children. We don’t need to be “educated” about the so-called value of these tests. Instead, those

who dare to believe that we are that easily manipulated need to be educated about the strength of our resolve. If this Task Force doesn't listen, I have no doubt that the refusal rate will easily double or triple next year.