

## **Andrew Morris, Teacher**

"The awful assumption is that when all of these mandated 'reforms' (Common Core, APPR, the aligned exams, teaching modules) are in place, the system will be fixed. This is egregious (and expensive), especially since there's very little research or proof to support the assumption. At the moment, the state's education policy is too incoherent to effectively and positively impact the students that deserve and need our attention the most. What does 'college readiness' mean? What type of college? What about those students choosing not to go to college, but into the military or directly into the workforce? There's no consensus regarding the parameters of 'readiness' or its characteristics. We're being told that the data points to a 'truth' that our students are not 'college ready,' but we have yet to define what this 'readiness' actually means. Unfortunately, this false narrative that our students are not academically prepared for college is being used to justify not only new standards and tests, but to also justify a new teacher evaluation system. It's this false narrative that drives the reforms currently sweeping the nation and smothering the voices of teachers. Why is it easier for that student in Perinton, NY to become college ready and so much more difficult for that student in the city of Rochester? We should be addressing issues of poverty, inequality, racism, lack of resources, etc.,. The state test results across the state reveal the gaps. Teachers have known about these gaps long before state testing revealed them. The tests are only recreating a reality that teachers are all too aware of. When the emphasis is on constant measurement, when the only aim of learning is to show results, we simply undermine and vulgarize education. Beyond the rhetorical promises, where's the evidence that official learning standards are useful or working? Do official, top-down expectations lead to greater achievement? The very existence of a Common Core Task Force presupposes that learning standards are necessary and that effective teachers or departments are incapable of developing and executing their own standards. Schools do not need Race to the Top reforms, NYSED's teaching modules and APPR, Questar's tests, Common Core, or the governor's task force. All of these externals are smothering public school districts across the state. Great teaching is the best reform there is. New York's teachers (fully trained professionals with Master's degrees and multiple credentials) have always been and always will be up to the task of providing the best possible education for their students. The real hindrance, the real enemy of education is bureaucracy. The Common Core Task Force is just another byproduct of this bureaucracy that stretches from one department of education to the next, from one politician to the next, from one business round table to the next, from one special interest group to the next. All the while, teachers and students continue doing the real work beneath its dark cloud. It's too late for conciliatory gestures. It's time for a mea culpa. It's time to give public schools back to their communities."