

We, the Board of Education of the West Genesee Central School District, Dr. Christopher Brown, Superintendent of Schools, and the West Genesee Teachers' Association are proud of our long-standing history of academic excellence. Our well-rounded curriculum is enriched by a strong music and art program, athletics, and many college classes.

**We strongly disagree with the educational reforms presented by Governor Cuomo in his recent State of the State address.** In his address, Governor Cuomo painted the public education system in New York State with a broad brush. He described a system in crisis, led by ineffective educators who are inadequately preparing our students for college and career success. While we acknowledge that the public education system faces challenges, we disagree that these issues exist everywhere and that the reforms proposed will have any meaningful impact on the real issues facing education today.

**We oppose high-stakes testing tied to teacher evaluation and district funding.** In the West Genesee Central School District, 98% of our students graduate and 90% go on to college. Our students are challenged by a curriculum that is rigorous and inclusive. We have an award-winning music program, competitive athletics and a broad offering of extra-curricular activities. Our teaching staff is professional, motivated and among the best in the nation. We have achieved this through focused teacher development and training regarding classroom instruction and curriculum decisions. We strongly believe that our district, like many others across the state, is best equipped to appropriately evaluate our teachers and our curriculum. We support local control and evaluation of schools.

**The real crisis in education today is one of educational inequality.** There is no disputing the direct connection between educational achievement and poverty. While the West Genesee Central School District had not experienced poverty in the past, the demographics have changed and we now face some of the same critical poverty related issues as many rural and urban schools. Funding schools based on their poverty level would help to ensure that students are cared for at the most appropriate levels.

**We support the full and equitable funding of school districts and the end of the Gap Elimination Adjustment.** In recent years, school districts across the state have been contending with reduced funding, the Gap Elimination Adjustment and the tax levy limit, while implementing a reform agenda with significant associated costs. In the past six years, the state has taken back more than \$20.492 million from the West Genesee Central School District through the Gap Elimination Adjustment alone.

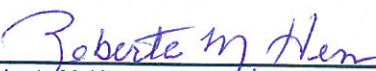
**We demand that Governor Cuomo release the State Aid runs so that districts can adequately plan for the upcoming year.** In the State of the State, Governor Cuomo proposed an additional \$1.1 billion in state aid for schools next year, representing a 4.8% increase over the current year. However, if the reforms he proposed are not enacted, the increase would drop to \$377 million, a decrease of \$723 million, well short of the \$2 billion or more that the NYS Board of Regents and leading education groups have called for to meet the needs of students next year. We strongly oppose the leveraging of our students' futures to further a political agenda.

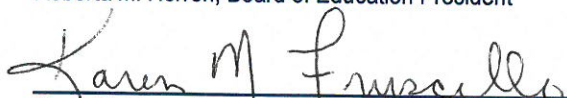


Governor Cuomo's latest reforms represent a gross overreach by the state to exert extensive control over local districts by misrepresenting the issues faced by economically-challenged urban and rural districts as a wide-spread educational crisis caused by inadequate teachers. At the same time, he failed to address any of the real issues facing the schools and the families in these districts.


We welcome Governor Cuomo and the Board of Regents to visit the West Genesee School District and encourage them to visit other districts so that they can understand what is really needed to achieve success and, more importantly, provide equal opportunity for all students.

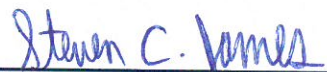
Sincerely,

  
Roberta M. Herron, Board of Education President

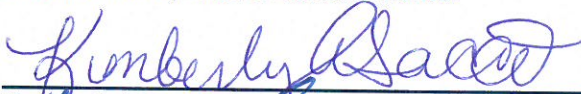
  
Karen M. Fruscello, Board of Education Vice President

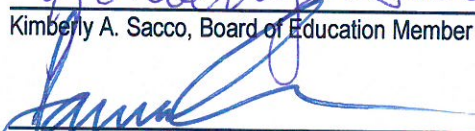
  
Kimberly B. Coyne, Board of Education Member

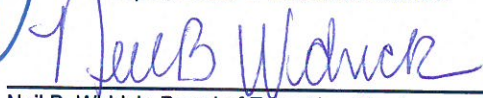
  
Vladimiro Hart-Zavoli, Board of Education Member

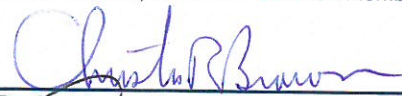
  
Steven C. James, Board of Education Member

  
Shawn J. Mitchell, Board of Education Member

  
Kimberly A. Sacco, Board of Education Member

  
James M. Soper, Board of Education Member

  
Neil B. Widrick, Board of Education Member

  
Dr. Christopher Brown, Superintendent, West Genesee Central Schools

  
John W. Mannion, President, West Genesee Teachers' Association