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DAVID G. McDONOUGH
Assemblyman 14th District

February 2014

Dear Neighbors:

During my 13 years in the State Assembly, there have been a number of important issues that have come before me. However, to date, I have yet to encounter an issue with such profound impact on our future as the Common Core Standards. Providing a quality education for our children is one of the most important issues facing state government, and one that I make a top priority every day.

Over the past six months, members of the Assembly Minority Conference hosted 11 forums across the state, several of which I participated in—including one here in Nassau County, one in Suffolk County, and one in New York City. These forums provided me and my colleagues the opportunity to receive feedback from parents, educators, students, and education advocates on Common Core and New York's education system. Simply put, the backlash from residents has been overwhelming.

Recently, my colleagues and I developed a report, "At the Educational Crossroads," which documents the concerns of those who spoke to us across the state. Over and over, we heard the same refrain, teachers who have become "test-preppers," bracing their students for an endless barrage of exams. Students are faltering under the stress of these tests and the negative culture they create in our classrooms. Individual Education Plans (IEP) for children with special needs are being ignored or disregarded due to ill-advised and unclear policies within the Common Core Standards. Administrators are trying to adapt to the changes, but many districts have rigid financial constraints that prohibit them from developing Common Core-aligned curriculum or providing sufficient professional development.

That's why I've joined my colleagues to offer the APPLE Plan, a comprehensive proposal to overhaul the Common Core Standards that have crippled New York's schools. First, it is imperative that we evaluate state assessments and curriculum. Upon review of the state assessments and curriculum, we could then implement more appropriate standards which would be phased in on a grade-by-grade basis, starting in first grade. Second, we must provide funding equity. Eliminating the current funding gap over a three-year period, while also providing state reimbursement for implementing teacher evaluations, Common Core, and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) would provide considerable relief for districts.

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You can read both the report and the subsequent plan online. “At the Educational Crossroads” is available at bit.ly/educationalcrossroads and the APPLE Plan can be found by visiting <http://bit.ly/APPLEplan>. While we continue to work to improve the quality of our children’s education, I encourage you to share your comments and concerns with me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave McDonough". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dave" being larger and more prominent than the last name "McDonough".

Dave McDonough
Assemblyman, 14th District