

# **A COMMON CORE RALLY CRY: STOP IT, FIX IT, OR SCRAP IT!**

By, Paula DeFilippo, Sachem East HS

On Saturday, August 17th this summer, two thousand parents, teachers, administrators, superintendents and politicians came from all over for a very inspiring and uplifting rally at the Comsewogue High School football field. Their common goal: to speak with one voice in support of providing a solid education for all students in New York State. Moving, articulate speeches were delivered by concerned parents, PTA presidents, educators, Assemblyman Graf, Assemblyman Englebright, NYSUT President Richard Ianuzzi, honor students, and more.

The final speaker was the superintendent of the Comsewogue School District, Dr. Joseph Rella. Dr. Rella reminded us that NYSED has likened Common Core implementation to “flying an airplane as it is being built.” He went on to announce that he was “canceling our ticket on that flight.” He was not concerned about this canceled flight, saying “this plane was not designed to fly and it never really got off the ground.” Dr. Rella told the crowd that his primary job was to ensure a safe environment for students; not just physically safe, but also emotionally safe. The emotional damage he has witnessed as a result of the faulty tests that were administered this past school year shook him to his core and he decided that he could not stand by and allow it to continue. His entire speech can be found on Youtube, and it is well worth the time to watch. However, the most important part came at the end, when he made the following resolution, which can be viewed on his website (<http://www.studentsnotscores.com/>):

WHEREAS, The NY State Common Core initiative, implementation, and testing regimen hurts children. And

WHEREAS, We believe that our children are a light, a beacon and that this light is in serious jeopardy of being extinguished by this abusive initiative.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,

We call upon the Governor, The Regents, The Commissioner of Education, and the State Legislature, to call a halt to it immediately AND have it examined by educators. If it is capable of being fixed - fix it. If it is not, then throw it out - scrap it.

STOP IT - FIX IT- or SCRAP IT.

More and more school districts are joining Dr. Rella in his fight for common sense in education. One Facebook group has started a movement called "Lace to The Top." They have adopted neon green shoelaces as their unifying symbol, and many school districts will see teachers, students, parents and administrators (including Dr. Rella) wearing these green laces as a show of solidarity. The SCTA wants our members in Sachem to stand alongside our surrounding districts and go green for education this September! We will make green laces available to our members at the beginning of the year, just check the website (<http://scta.ny.aft.org>) or the Facebook page for details!

Please check out the websites and Facebook groups that have organized to show opposition to the bullying that is high-stakes testing: "Lace to the Top", "Badass Teachers Association" and of course, Dr. Rella's website: <http://studentsnotscores.com>

Why is it important that we stand together at this critical time in education? Because we have been speaking up for years, but no one has listened to us because we have not been speaking LOUDLY enough! To speak LOUDLY, we need to speak together with one voice! It doesn't take a lot of time. You don't have to spend any money. You don't even have to leave the comfort of your home!

Dr. Rella got a laugh from the crowd during his speech on August 17th when he called himself "A technology immigrant." He told us that a technology immigrant sends an email and then calls the recipient up to ask "Hey - did you get my email?" He went on to say that he learned a lot about technology this summer after watching a connect-ed call he made to parents regarding his decision to put the brakes on high-stakes testing go viral in a matter of hours. After placing the call, he was shocked when he came into the office the following day to find hundreds of supportive emails from all over the United States and even one from Indonesia! Dr. Rella came to the conclusion that the best way to speak LOUDLY and be heard is through social media. He encouraged us all to join Facebook groups such as "Lace to the Top," to use Twitter to get the message out (use #studentsnotscores and/or #lacetothetop on all your tweets), to go online and sign petitions electronically (you will find one on his "Students Not Scores" website), and to send emails to those who have the power to effect change (contacts, email templates and links are also on the "Students Not Scores" website). The green shoelaces will serve as a daily reminder to keep sending emails, tweeting and sharing on Facebook. It doesn't matter if you send the same email or Twitter message every day, just do what you can. Now is the time to get involved and our focus must be laser-sharp: High Stakes Testing Hurts Our Kids. Period.

Our rally cry is: STOP IT, FIX IT, OR SCRAP IT! Join the SCTA in speaking in one voice!