

FORT PLAIN CENTRAL SCHOOL

Douglas C. Burton, Superintendent of Schools

April 1, 2015

Dear Parents,


I am writing in light of the current political scene revolving around the New York State standardized tests. There is a pull from Governor Cuomo to strengthen the weight of NYS tests against teacher evaluation scores, and a pull for the New York Teacher's union to encourage parents to have their children refuse to take the tests. This is called an "opt out movement." This letter is meant to share with you the actual affects that a decision like this has on Fort Plain Central School, as well as on our children.

New York State does not acknowledge an "opt out" decision. Not having your child take the tests is in fact, a refusal, and NYS tests are required under the Federal No Child Left Behind Law. Although I will not (and do not) disagree with many parents' philosophies regarding the current political implications of these tests, I'd like to point out that at this current time, taking away test scores that could otherwise benefit teachers could also eventually hurt the teachers and the school by forcing them to receive lower scores. Our teachers work very hard- not to "teach to the test," but for student learning and mastery of their goals.

Additionally, if test scores are low, funds that we receive from the Government would be mandated by the Government and not by our local choosing. This could eventually affect academic programs. Furthermore, if the school does not achieve 95% of students taking the test, we would fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and we would become ineligible to become a Reward School, which would potentially provide us with additional funding in the future.

Please recognize that I truly understand many philosophies regarding standardized tests, but in this current moment in time, refusing to have your children take them does not help their teachers or this school. I also want to stress that each and every one of our teachers works hard to ensure that our students are both well prepared, and focused positively on doing the very best they can on any test that is given, no matter its purpose.

Sincerely,



Douglas C. Burton,
Superintendent of Schools