**INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEST REFUSAL LETTERS 2016 -2017**

The first thing you should do before filling out your refusal letter is find out which assessments your district administers and if they are tied to the evaluation plan (APPR). During the moratorium, teacher, principal, school, and district evaluations cannot use a state assessment result (ELA or math) to generate a score. Many now use a separate local assessment as part of the score (some will use the regent’s grades as their score). Many different local assessments have been and are still being used for the local part of the evaluation score. Some have always been used and some have been implemented only to satisfy the state requirements. Some are standardized, some computerized, and some are written by teachers. A few have diagnostic value, and many do not. Some parents may want to refuse any assessment tied to evaluations. Some may want to refuse computerized assessments to ensure their child's data cannot be collected and tracked. Not all districts will honor the request to refuse local assessments. If your child is old enough to refuse on their own, refusals can still be accomplished in those cases. Another option is to allow your child to take the local assessment if the district agrees to withhold the score from the evaluation system. This would ensure authentic administration and scoring for the benefit of the child and classroom teacher. Please read up on the differences, speak to your child's teacher if you are unsure, and make the decision that best fits your child and your family. Refusal letters should go to the school principal. Copies can also be given to the teacher and the superintendent. These are questions that should be asked BEFORE your child takes a local assessment:

Questions to ask your district before allowing your child to participate:

1. How much time will my child spend using the chosen program/assessment on the computers throughout their day/week/year?

2. Is this program just assessments or are there lessons attached and given throughout the day?

3. Who will have access to the data? Is it a closed system (only district personnel have access) or an open system (company providing the service has access to data)

4. Is my child's student ID being attached to his login information? (Student ID's can link to countless personally identifiable information that you wouldn't want the companies providing the service to have access to).

5. Can you use a "fake" name (or only first two letters of last name) to identify him/her when my child is logged into this system (reducing the chances of data mining)

6. What decisions are being made based on these computer testing results? Are you allowing the computer program to determine student needs or are you relying on the expertise of the teacher? (You could request that the teacher determine if your child needs remedial help BEFORE) these assessments are given.

7. Will this local assessment be used as a “back up score” if I refuse other state assessments?

**DESCRIPTIONS/TERMS:**

**APPR - Annual Professional Performance Review**Just like students, teachers, principals, schools, and districts are given a number grade at the end of every year that represents their effectiveness rating. These scores are used to rank, sort, and punish. Schools can be closed and teachers may lose their jobs or face disciplinary action based on the results. As per the new NYS law passed in 2015, 50% of an educator’s scores must be based on an assessment.

**LOCAL ASSESSMENTS**
In addition to state assessments, a portion of the APPR score can be based on local assessments. Local assessments are also called SLO's, and can include MAP, STAR, DIBELS, AIMSweb, I-Ready and teacher created assessments.\*\* These benchmark assessments are often administered the first week of school.

**SLO/Benchmarks - Student Learning Objective**
Educators who teach a course that does not have a state exam often use Student Learning Objectives to determine part of their evaluation. Here is how this process works: Teachers that need to use an SLO must give a pre-assessment (benchmark) to their students. This exam could be a district, regional or corporate created test that would assess the students in what content and skills the children should obtain at the end of the school year. Basically it is giving the students an abbreviated version of the final exam. Almost all the students will score poorly on the pre-assessment because they have not learned the curriculum yet and achieve a low baseline level. After the “pre-assessments” are scored, the districts make a prediction as to how their students will perform on the final assessment of the year. If the teacher does not meet this “expected outcome of performance”, then that educator loses points on his or her evaluation score.

\*\*Some districts have chosen to use assessments that are widely considered to be valuable diagnostic tools, such as the DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) and the F&P (Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment), as their local assessment. Again, the concern is that once an assessment is used to rate a teacher, its diagnostic value decreases. This is a perfect case in which a parent could request to have the test administered, but the score withheld from the evaluation.