



BYRON-BERGEN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Interim Superintendent – Loren A. Penman
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Special Education Chairperson – Donna M. Moscicki, Ed.D.

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Elementary School Principal – Keith Wing
Asst. 5-12 Principal – Jennifer Doyle

October 20, 2011

Governor Andrew Cuomo
The Capital Building
Albany, NY 12224-0341

Dear Governor Cuomo,

I am writing to ask you if you are sleeping well at night. I ask this question because if you were to ask me that same question I would have to answer **“NO.”** I am worried for my school district and its existence beyond the current year's budget. Why am I worried you ask. Let me give you a few reasons.

1. At the end of the 2011-12 school year we will lose \$505,781 in Federal Jobs Act funds. Presently there is no indication from NY State or the federal government of any funds to back fill this amount. This amount alone would result in a tax increase of 6.67% or the dismissal of ten (10) more employees who have an average cost of \$50,000 per year.
2. The increases in NYS Teacher Retirement and NYS Employee Retirement pension contributions represent increases of \$164,300 and \$134,700, respectively or 2.2% and 1.78% to the tax levy.
3. Initial talks about anticipated increases in our health insurance premiums are in the 8.5% to 12.5% range or translated into dollar amounts of \$140,200 to \$206,095 after 20% contributions by district employees. These increases represent another 1.8% to 2.7% increase in our tax levy. As you are aware these cost increases are included in the 2% cap.
4. Salary increases for the non-instructional staff from negotiated contracts represents \$44,700 a 2% increase. Presently we are in negotiations with our faculty association attempting to limit their salary increase at 2%; however, they are in no hurry because under the Triborough Amendment they receive their annual step increase resulting in a 2.91% salary increase. There is no incentive for this bargaining unit to negotiate because the law allows them to receive a larger raise than we are able to offer.
5. The only unfunded mandate relief we have seen is permission to transport up to three high school students to a seat on our buses.
6. How do I explain to the local taxpayer a tax increase of 4.79% based on your formula when you have stated the **“Tax Cap”** is “2%?” Additionally, you have handcuffed our district with the 60% majority and if the budget is not passed after a second vote there will be no tax increase.



Challenge, Engage and Nurture



If the tone of my letter sounds angry then I apologize, however, you have read it correctly. I am watching public education being destroyed systematically. I am worried about what is going to be left for our children. All I see are more unfunded mandates and less funding with local taxpayers saying we cannot take it any longer. There is an article in today's newspapers about relief of unfunded mandates regarding Medicaid; however, this does not help our situation. A second article talks about federal relief to add back lost teaching positions. The problem is how long will this assistance last and will NY State backfill this assistance at a later date.

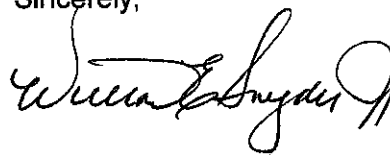
For the 2010-11 school year we abolished 26.5 staffing positions, 18 were teachers and 2 administrators. In 2011-12 we eliminated another 1.5 positions, cancelled the purchase of all equipment district wide, cancelled the purchase of all materials and supplies for classrooms, limited our purchasing of textbooks, library materials, software and computer hardware to state aided amounts. We also reduced student extra-curricular activities by 40% and eliminated one bus run. Additionally we have planned to use \$450,000 of fund balance and \$531,500 of reserves to offset revenue loses and increased costs. This still resulted in a **3.99% tax** increase.

For the period of 2001 through 2010, the statewide average school tax rate was \$15.45 per \$1000 of assessed value. For that same period the rate for New York City was \$14.88/\$1000. Our tax rate for that same period of time was \$23.74 or \$8.29 above the state average. Our rates ranged from a low of \$22.81 to a high of \$24.67 in 2010. Adjustments must be made for more equitable allocations of state aid to upstate school districts. Without additional support our school district will be insolvent within the next two school years.

Your immediate attention is needed to reforms to prevent the collapse of rural school districts. Your continued lack of action widens the already large gap between the "Haves" and the "Have Nots." Our children deserve the same chance as the more affluent communities. Only you can make that happen.

If you would like to discuss this matter further I can be reached at 585-494-1220, ext. 2429 or by email at wsnyder@bbschools.org.

Sincerely,



William E. Snyder, Jr.
School Business Official

Cc: Loren A. Penman, Interim Superintendent
Ernest Haywood, Board of Education President
Dr. Michael Glover, Superintendent-Genesee Valley BOCES

