



## Huntington Union Free School District

*"A Tradition of Excellence Since 1657"*

James W. Polansky

Superintendent of Schools

August 7, 2013

Dear Students, Parents and Community Members:

You may have seen in the media an overview of the latest student assessment results reported by the New York State Education Department. Earlier this year, students in grades three through eight were required to participate in New York State's English language arts and math assessments. These assessments were based upon the new, more rigorous Common Core Learning Standards, which were introduced for the 2012-2013 school year.

Prior to the implementation of these assessments, we expressed our strong concerns to the State Education Department and the Commissioner of Education, John B. King, Jr., regarding assessment outcome validity. These concerns were authenticated in a memo from Commissioner King dated August 2, 2013. In that memo, he stated, "Scores are expected to be significantly lower than the 2011-2012 scores ... effectively creating a new baseline measurement of student learning."

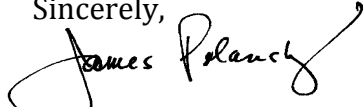
Furthermore, in Commissioner King's communications dated today, he refers to the statewide outcomes as "sobering." In addition, he declared, "I want to make it very clear that the change in test scores does not mean that students are learning less or that teachers and schools are performing worse ..."

In sum, it is clear that the significant decrease in this year's assessment results, experienced across Long Island and throughout the state, is not attributable to a decline in student performance, but instead, reflects the fact that the assessments were prematurely implemented before students could be more comprehensively instructed in the new, more rigorous, Common Core Learning Standards curriculum. While the State Education Department established the cut scores, which determined the new proficiency levels, it should be further noted that it is impossible to accurately compare student progress using the prior year's assessment results.

We strongly believe that there is no correlation between these latest assessment results and our students' ability to be college and career ready. This opinion is supported by the high percentage of recent graduates attending many of the most prominent and prestigious colleges and universities in the country, as well as the significant recognitions our students achieved on all grade levels during this past school year.

While we are obliged to provide you with these assessment results, we feel equally obligated to provide the appropriate information needed to understand the significant difference in individual scores from prior years. We take great pride in the quality education we provide to all students in our school district. The recent assessment results are *not* an accurate reflection of our students' ability to learn or of the instructional skills of our professional staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Polansky". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J" and a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

James Polansky  
Superintendent of Schools