

From: Donald James

Sent: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 4:37 PM

To: steven.katz@nysed.gov

Cc: Donald James <DJames@commack.k12.ny.us>; **Subject:** Geometry Regents

Dear Mr. Katz,

As you know, the results of the Geometry Regents and related scoring was disastrous state-wide this year, and arguably in years past. Although students in Commack did fairly well, the scores have been lower than expected based on historical data and misaligned to our locally-determined class grades and assessments. What you may not know is that Commack graduates routinely attend college (97%+) and stay in college (89%+ attend their second year), each number is substantially above the average. This information is meant to add context to our consternation over the results.

As the brief synopsis of data above indicates, our goal in Commack is to prepare all students for whatever they want or need to achieve at the next level of learning by affording “access and opportunity” to all students to higher level classes. However, the design of the Geometry Regents exam and the related “cut” score hinders our ability to convince parents and students alike that students should enroll in Geometry. Subsequently, students may alter or halt their high school mathematics education prior to enrolling in Geometry due to the issues mentioned above.

Make no mistake, if the teachers in Commack were able to prepare and administer an assessment in Geometry, it would take in to account multiple measures, be balanced and fair, and likely measure mathematics concepts the current, State-provided exam fails to address at a deep level. Anecdotally, we know that many students who sat for this test and received a substantially lower than expected score were dramatically affected feeling ever closer to developing a sense of “failure identity” related to mathematics. Unfortunately, this failure-identify development pushes students away from higher level math after years of our system working to develop a sense of math success and real mastery in mathematics; yet another example of how a flawed State testing program is failing our students. At this time, there is no doubt that the State needs to develop a better way to assess, and score, student performance in Geometry, or leave it to local districts.

I am aware that the routine response to complaints about the questions on this exam and the “cut” score is that teachers set the cut score and teachers accepted the questions. I suggest that the teachers involved did the best they could under the conditions, with the questions provided and under the parameters set by the facilitators. In the absence of allowing local districts to measure student achievement in Geometry, it is time to revise the process for the development of Geometry Regents Exam questions and revise the parameters given for setting the “cut” score.

Please know that I, and the staff in Commack, stand ready to assist in any way possible in an effort to improve the Geometry Regents exam.

I thank you in advance for your time and consideration as we seek to provide the best possible education for all students.

Sincerely,

Donald James

Donald A. James, Ed. D.
Superintendent, Commack UFSD