



Donnellan also reported that she was easily able to answer the very few questions put to her by the court, although she stressed that she was unable to detect the leanings of the judges.

The Appellate Division should give us a decision in two to three months. Members are reminded that regardless of the outcome, either side will be free to appeal to the Court of Appeals, the state's highest court.

## **DEBATES OMIT PUBLIC ED**

Throughout the nation, debate rages about high stakes testing, the connection of high stakes testing to teacher evaluations, the efficacy of the Common Core State Standards and the achievement gap. Yet, in neither the Republicans two debates or the one Democratic one did we hear much about the candidates positions on k-12 education issues.

To be fair, Democrats Clinton and Sanders exchanged views on making college education more accessible, with Sanders wanting to make state college and university tuition free and Clinton arguing for access to be means tested so that it would be free for the neediest. But, absent thus far was any serious discussion of the issues confronting k-12 public education. One might have expected Hillary Clinton, having received the early endorsement of both the NEA and AFT expected to have thrown a bone in their direction, perhaps proposing some modification of the yearly high stakes testing that is part of the No Child Left Behind Law and at the moment is also part of the rewrite of that law before Congress. Yet, we got nothing, but a few digs by Donald Trump about Jeb Bush's support for Common Core.

A central challenge to our two national education unions is to get our issues into the campaigns for the presidency. This far, their performance has been highly ineffective.

## **DISTRICT APPLIES FOR APPR WAIVER**

Separate and apart from the negotiations for a new contract, the district and the PCT are expected under the law to negotiate a new APPR agreement that conforms to the law passed last year along with the state budget. While we have had several meetings to discuss this matter, both the district and our union have agreed that we cannot possibly come to an agreement in time for it to be implemented this year. Accordingly, we have applied for and have been granted a waiver. As of this writing, of the over 700 school districts in the state, only 76 new plans have been submitted and many fewer than that approved.

That means that the existing APPR plan will be in effect for this entire school year. Nothing about teacher evaluation will change until next September. We will be working with NYSUT to get the law changed in the upcoming session of the legislature.

## **CLASS SIZES CREEP UP**

Initial reports from the buildings indicate troubling areas where class sizes have increased. At a time when more and more is asked of classroom teachers having high school student loads in excess of 130 students in subjects like English makes ludicrous objectives like focusing attention on writing and individualizing instruction. How many writing assignments can a teacher reasonably correct and grade when she has to face 130 papers each time?

We are also experiencing a related problem as a result of the districts pushing more and more children to try our most advanced high school courses. Experience suggests that such a policy leads to numbers of students realizing in October that they wish to move to a lower level class. Proper scheduling would have us take this knowledge into account and schedule numbers of lower level courses that would begin with lower enrollments but would provide space for the inevitable number of kids who wish to take a step down.

The Officers of the PCT will be talking to central office and the Board of Education about this problem.

## **AFT AND NEA ENDORSE CLINTON**

Both national education unions have now endorsed Hillary Clinton in the Democratic presidential primary. Both organizations claim that their endorsements followed extensive engagement with their memberships.

Be that as it may, there is a substantial body of opinion in the ranks that this decision was premature, that it would have been more strategic to wait until the candidates had expressed clearer positions on the education issues of concern to our membership. Do the candidates support annual high stakes testing? Do they support the linkage of high stakes testing to teacher evaluation? What's their position on charter schools? Will they oppose the increasing influence of the private sector on public institutions like schools?

One might have expected clearer answers to these and other questions before we committed the over 4,000,000 members of both organizations to a candidate. One also might have expected our national leaders avoid angering those members who have been energized by the Sanders candidacy whose work will be essential for a victory in the general election.

## **LEADING THE WAY ON OPTING OUT**

Members with children in grades 3 through 8 need to get their opt out letters into their home districts and lead the way in the battle against the testing epidemic.