

## **Joint Statement from Cheektowaga and Depew School Superintendents in response to Buffalo News article on County Executive Poloncarz dated March 8, 2018**

We are disappointed that this matter was brought up again without any discussion with representatives from the Erie County school districts. Contrary to County Executive Poloncarz's statement, "Who else is going to bring this up?" The topic of school reorganization, consolidation and merger is not new, and has been explored multiple times. Most recently in February of 2014, after then State Assemblyman Dennis Gabryszak brought it up, the Boards of Education representing the four school districts in Cheektowaga passed resolutions asking for the State to come in and determine the cost versus savings and the educational impacts of a consolidation plan for the districts. The application was turned down. Our application received only 40 out of 100 points, as the cost savings did not warrant us moving forward. Similar studies of the districts have been conducted dating back to 1989. Further, a University of Buffalo study published in 2009 indicated that districts with student enrollments under 1000 are identified as places where savings can be achieved through merger, reorganization and consolidation. All of the Cheektowaga and Depew School Districts have student enrollments over 1000. It is also important to note that there are 674 school districts across New York State. All of the districts mentioned by the County Executive fall very close to the NYS median for student enrollment. Though small for central Erie County, these districts are not small when comparing to enrollment statewide.

The UB study further indicated that the larger the merger's partners the higher the likelihood that merger related expenses will erode potential operational savings, and in some cases trigger size related inefficiencies. We look forward to reviewing the "eye-opening study" that the County Executive referenced, and wish that he had reached out to local school superintendents for insight into this complex issue. We hope that this study demonstrates evidence that school districts have saved money from taking the actions he suggests.

According to the 2009 UB study, instead of regionalization by consolidation, the BOCES model represents regionalization based on cooperation. All four Cheektowaga and Depew districts strongly participate in cost reduction sharing through BOCES participation and many other means. A few examples include:

- Cooperative bidding of materials and supplies such as copy machines, computers, iPads, chrome books and technology related items.
- Participation in Special Education Services to best meet the needs of students with disabilities which is cost effective.
- Participation in career and technical learning services with numerous possibilities (example: auto tech, cosmetology, electrical robotics, welding etc.) for students while sharing the capital and teaching costs of such learning.
- Participation in the sharing of certain required staff such as ENL teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech, hearing and vision teachers, etc. - this allows us to share staff as opposed to hiring our own.
- Participation in activities such as policy development, teacher training and development, labor relations, and administrative services.

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Cheektowaga Sloan - Andrea Galenski  
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Depew - Jeffrey Rabey  
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