

# A word from the stakeholder unions in the Newburgh Enlarged City School District

In a recently published article, “*Literacy scores on exams lag in Newburgh school district,*” Lana Bellamy describes a bleak future for the students of Newburgh schools. Bellamy implies that as a district, Newburgh is not working hard to improve the lives of all of our students. On behalf of the dedicated faculty, staff and hardworking students of the Newburgh school district, we ask that you, the public, look beyond the rhetoric of a singular view and take a deep dive into

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what the Newburgh Enlarged City School District is truly accomplishing.

Newburgh is a district that takes pride in our cultural diversity. A great number of our families face hardships, and yet they encourage and support their children every day because they understand the value of an education.

The children who attend our schools strive to work toward their full potential. The turnover rate of our educators is extremely low because those who work in our schools are here because they feel compelled to make a difference in the lives of their students. Walk into any of our 14 buildings on any given day, and

you will find teachers collaborating, administration leading, support staff assisting and, most importantly, students persevering and learning.

Bellamy’s article highlights test scores that in a narrow view would seem “not too encouraging.” However, other points of data that may have provided a broader view of what is happening in the Newburgh school district are not mentioned. For instance, four years ago, the 3-8 ELA scores showed that 17% of students were proficient. As of June 2018, 31 % of our students are proficient, a 14% increase over four years. We almost doubled our success rate in that short time period. The article also fails to mention that the overall state average for proficiency in ELA for grades 3-8 is at 45.2%. The Commissioner of Education acknowledges that schools across the state need to continue to work on exploring how to narrow the gap between various subgroups of students. Newburgh is not unique. Many other Districts in New York are struggling with these gaps. Though we know we have a great deal of work to do, our efforts to date should not be diminished.

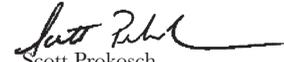
The article also ignores Newburgh’s successes including our increasing graduation rate and the number of our schools now in good standing. In June 2018, Newburgh had a graduation rate of 79%. When you compare it to the New York State average of 80.4%, the data shows that Newburgh is not far from achieving a graduation rate on par with the rest of the state. Newburgh has also increased the number

of schools in good standing from two schools to eight over the same four year period. By omitting these achievements, the article does not tell the whole story about the hard work that our faculty, staff and students are doing in the Newburgh school district.

Readers also would not know that we have graduates who attend Ivy League colleges, join the armed forces and enter into trade schools. Newburgh is one of the only districts who offers a career and technical education program that rivals any of those across the state. We currently have 20 programs including: cosmetology, barbering, auto mechanics, culinary, certified nursing assistant to name a few. Our students can earn a college degree while attending high school through our P-Tech program and our partnership with Marist College. Our technology initiative puts 21<sup>st</sup> century-programs in the hands of all of our students. We offer many after-school programs that allow students to explore their creativity and interests. We have more advanced placement courses than most of our surrounding districts and a dedicated campus that allows students to learn through on site internships. We have opportunities for every student in our district to find something they love.

Bellamy’s article is quick to show fault. It encourages the reader to wonder what isn’t taking place in the classroom, to question the integrity of those we entrust with our students, and to deny our students’ hard work. It sought to characterize what Newburgh is not. Newburgh schools provide a strong, well

rounded, student centered education. We provide hope and possibilities. We provide encouragement, and we are proud of our students who work through adversity and create their own path in life. Our educators see the potential in each student and work tirelessly to nurture that potential into success. We are thankful for our families who entrust us to educate their children. ***We are the Newburgh Enlarged City School District, and we are proud of the accomplishments we have achieved over the last four years, and we are eager to see where all of our hard work and collaboration leads us in the future.***



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