

Garden City Teachers' Association

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April 16, 2015

Dear NYSAPE Steering Committee,

Let me begin by saying thank you for your tireless advocacy on behalf of public education. Your efforts have helped to galvanize parents, teachers, and communities against the “reform” agenda that will destroy public education. A lot of good comes from your group!

Unfortunately, today the Garden City community had a negative experience with NYSAPE – the mobile billboard. Over the past few weeks, the mobile billboard has come through our community on Monday and Tuesday utilizing three major roadways – Stewart Ave., Nassau Blvd., and Old Country Road. The only time it has stopped in our community is at a red light.

Today I was called at 8:00am from a GCTA officer informing me that the NYSAPE billboard truck had been PARKED in the bus circle of the Garden City Middle School. A building administrator and the GCTA officer went to the driver and told him to immediately get off the property. The driver claimed that he noticed a sign that prohibited trucks and stopped to check his paperwork. I was skeptical at first, but after learning that the truck then came down a side street at my elementary school and stopped in front of the school for approximately a minute, it is my belief that these were intentional stops on the driver’s route today. It is completely inappropriate for the billboard to be parked in front of ANY school, especially when children are arriving for the day or in class! Unfortunately, the perception in the community is today’s billboard truck was organized by the GCTA, and the damage is done.

The GCTA has advocated strongly in support of a parent’s right to refuse and encouraging them to exercise that right. We expressed our position by mailing a letter to every parent in the community that contained resources including a link to your website, as well as making a robo-call to every parent who had a child in grades 3-8. However, we also respect any parent who chooses not to exercise their right to refuse. This is not an easy decision in most households, especially if both parents have different opinions. I know our advocacy wasn’t well-received by all parents even though the intent was never to offend or be intrusive, and we stopped our advocacy Sunday evening, prior to the start of the assessments this week. Just as we advocate against a “one size fits all” approach to education, the same applies to advocacy efforts. While there may be some communities that would like this truck rolling through their communities or stopped at their schools during testing days, it doesn’t work in Garden City. Our parents have been educated and informed – the decision on refusal is theirs; not mine, not yours.

I’m requesting that whatever advocacy efforts NYSAPE makes during the remaining testing schedule that they be made without including the Garden City community.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Pollitt".

Kevin Pollitt

President, Garden City Teachers' Association