

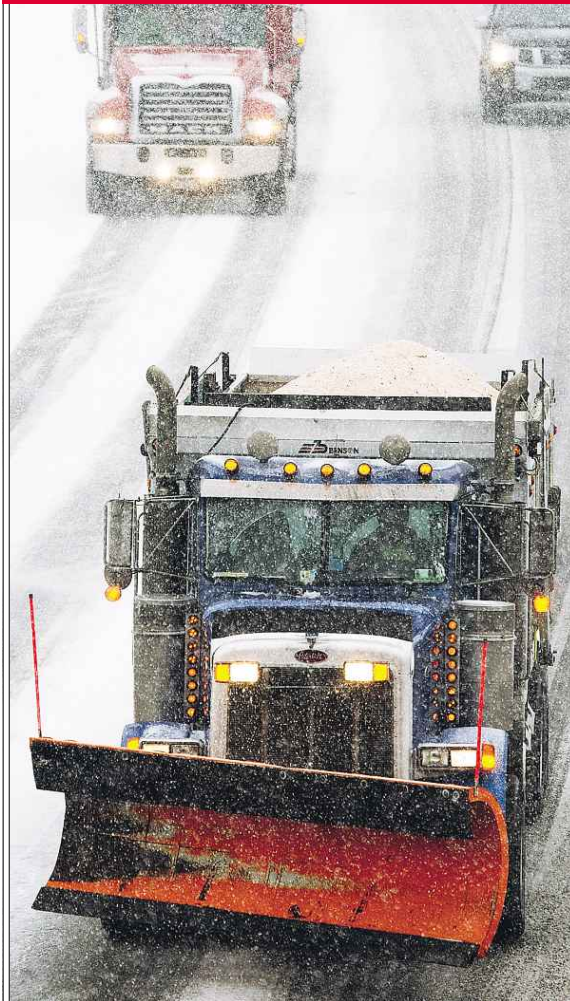
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Saturday
Jan. 23, 2016

Newsday

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STORM STORIES BEGIN ON A2-3
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LI SCHOOLS

\$200M OPT-OUT WORRY

Superintendents fear feds
could penalize districts where
students refuse testing

A4-5

SCHOOL AID AT STAKE

LI supes fear test boycotts could lead to penalties

BY JOHN HILDEBRAND

john.hildebrand@newsday.com

Boycotts of Common Core tests could cost Long Island's public schools more than \$200 million in federal and state financial aid if Washington imposes penalties for low student test-participation rates, key superintendents in Nassau and Suffolk counties say in a letter to acting U.S. Education Secretary John B. King Jr.

The Island's school leaders joined colleagues in the Lower Hudson Valley to warn King of "tremendous impact" on their districts should test refusals in April equal or surpass those of last spring. King was state education commissioner in New York before moving to the federal agency early last year.

The superintendents, representing a total of 192 school districts and nearly 700,000 students, contend that withholding of aid could impede state and local efforts to improve the testing system. State links between the exams and teacher evaluations have sparked widespread protests from parents and educators, and the nation's largest-ever student test boycotts.

Estimated potential aid losses are \$123 million in Suffolk, \$86 million in Nassau and \$140 million for four counties in the Lower Hudson Valley, the letter says.

It is signed by Lorna Lewis, superintendent of Plainview-Old Bethpage schools, and Susan Schnebel, the superintendent in the Islip district. Lewis is president of the Nassau County Council of School Superintendents; Schnebel presides over the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association.

A third signer is Mary Fox-Alter, superintendent of Pleasantville schools in Westchester County and president of the Lower Hudson

Council of School Superintendents. That group represents administrators in Westchester, Rockland, Dutchess and Putnam counties.

Student opt-out rates on Common Core state tests last spring averaged 43 percent in Suffolk County and 36 percent in Nassau — among the highest figures in the state. The highest refusal rate in an individual district was 79 percent; the lowest was zero.

A long-standing federal law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, requires a student participation rate of at least 95 percent in annual state testing mandated by the U.S. Education Department. The law was amended in December to address local and state concerns over federal mandates covering testing and the tying of exam results to teacher evaluations, but the 95 percent participation rule remains in place.

The federal department notified states the same month that it might take action — including financial penalties — when percentages of students taking required tests fall below the 95 percent benchmark.

District-by-district figures released by the superintendents yesterday showed that some of the lowest opt-out rates were in school systems with the largest numbers of impoverished students — for example, 7 percent in Roosevelt and 11 percent in Wyandanch. Such districts are the most dependent on federal and state financial support.

"The districts that have the most to lose are the ones least responsible for opt-outs," Lewis said yesterday.

In a response yesterday evening, Jo Ann Webb, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Education Department, cited the agency's earlier letters to New York and other states warning of potential penalties, including reduced aid.

Jeanette Deutermann of



Empty seats at Valley Stream Memorial Junior High School, where students opted out in April 2015.



Lorna Lewis, superintendent of Plainview-Old Bethpage schools.



Susan Schnebel, superintendent of the Islip school district.



Mary Fox-Alter, superintendent of Pleasantville schools.

North Bellmore, a former teacher and parent who founded the LI Opt-Out, a grass-roots network, reiterated her belief that federal action is unlikely.

"I've never seen an indication that that's even a possibility," Deutermann said.

The boycott leader cited a recent statement by David Cleary, chief of staff to Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

Cleary said the education law authorizes states, rather than federal officials, to decide the consequences for schools that did not meet the 95 percent requirement. The statement was posted on a

blog by Diane Ravitch, a New York University professor who served as counselor to Alexander when he was education secretary under President George H.W. Bush.

State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia said through a spokesman yesterday that the agency has made no decision on imposing penalties, and is working with districts to change academic standards, assessments and evaluations.

Long Island has been at the forefront of the test-boycott controversy, recording the heaviest concentrations of student refusals in the state during English language arts and math exams in grades three through eight

last spring.

Statewide, more than 200,000 students — approximately 20 percent of those eligible — pulled out of testing, the largest boycott in the nation. About 70,000 of those pupils were on the Island.

"With the acknowledgment that the system needs to be revisited for improvement, now is not the time to penalize school districts," the superintendents' letter says.

INTERACTIVE

LI school aid endangered by opt-outs.

newsday.com/data

HOW MUCH DISTRICTS COULD LOSE

Superintendents associations representing public school districts in Nassau County, Suffolk County and the Lower Hudson Valley released data yesterday showing federal and state funds they say the government could withhold if student test refusals make districts fall below the required federal participation rate of 95 percent.

Chart for Nassau and Suffolk shows pre-K through 12th-grade enrollment; test-refusal percentage for students in grades 3-8 taking state English and math tests in spring 2015; Title I, Part A federal funding; and the increase in state aid from the 2014-15 to 2015-16 school years. Districts that show a negative state-aid figure reflect systems that already had a cut in state aid. The Little Flower district is the only residential Special Act public district on Long Island; it serves disadvantaged children.

District	P-12 enrollment	Test refusal (grades 3-8)	Potential Title I funding loss	Potential state aid loss
Nassau				
Baldwin	4,686	42%	431,456	1,863,844
Bellmore	1,040	58%	34,235	1,673
Bellmore-Merrick	5,560	68%	155,162	2,177,013
Bethpage	2,896	44%	91,865	538,348
Carle Place	1,346	46%	72,417	449,253
East Meadow	7,041	29%	436,311	2,094,453
East Rockaway	1,205	57%	98,668	466,154
East Williston	1,730	23%	56,934	310,215
Elmont	3,853	5%	542,791	1,380,650
Farmingdale	5,982	64%	345,277	1,601,221
Floral Park	1,474	27%	86,900	300,690
Franklin Square	2,026	35%	100,478	346,490
Freeport	7,034	18%	1,476,123	7,556,464
Garden City	3,884	46%	114,494	490,759
Glen Cove	3,232	34%	779,740	1,173,530
Great Neck	6,624	13%	563,041	903,677
Hempstead	7,699	3%	2,149,637	9,322,037
Herricks	3,939	16%	122,002	1,191,963
Hewlett-Woodmere	3,083	49%	258,890	1,265,430
Hicksville	5,189	30%	476,127	1,578,903
Island Park	746	34%	93,843	-72,003
Island Trees	2,265	51%	143,023	814,588
Jericho	2,952	21%	145,739	258,583
Lawrence	2,857	17%	793,181	1,253,481
Levittown	7,295	64%	228,989	750,382
Locust Valley	2,159	40%	159,553	346,404
Long Beach	3,870	34%	429,719	1,619,284
Lynbrook	2,798	59%	159,317	941,895
Malverne	1,684	29%	209,083	745,032
Manhasset	3,347	5%	86,159	356,390
Massapequa	7,239	60%	170,803	1,073,302
Merrick	1,482	48%	88,331	-62,800
Mineola	2,817	20%	179,232	734,396
New Hyde Park	1,714	27%	103,194	1,080,237
North Bellmore	2,165	63%	64,203	677,601
North Merrick	1,203	55%	39,610	509,855
North Shore	2,692	40%	166,942	432,657
Oceanside	5,637	37%	304,151	1,503,190
Oyster Bay	1,621	38%	135,072	162,022
Plainedge	3,132	76%	93,222	717,328
Plainview	4,892	49%	125,530	1,302,744
Port Washington	5,351	24%	301,435	754,188
Rockville Center	3,554	59%	247,426	661,929
Roosevelt	3,321	7%	780,148	3,335,550
Roslyn	3,143	33%	176,516	576,298
Seaford	2,341	64%	71,849	661,563
Sewanhaka	8,077	27%	728,954	1,971,949
Syosset	6,286	35%	351,222	246,778
Uniondale	6,609	12%	1,186,826	2,145,157
Valley Stream 13	2,120	36%	162,938	1,023,149
Valley Stream 24	1,090	27%	273,428	380,682
Valley Stream 30	1,547	7%	246,866	537,144
Valley Stream Central	4,486	31%	397,202	-527,384
Wantagh	3,115	52%	71,950	993,092
West Hempstead	2,118	17%	264,746	1,393,827
Westbury	5,099	5%	1,004,261	3,703,118
Suffolk				
Amagansett	111	8%	*	18,905
Amitiville	3,163	40%	666,734	2,708,658
Babylon	1,630	59%	62,194	382,872
Bay Shore	6,211	44%	629,680	2,223,345
Bayport-Blue Point	2,357	59%	229,242	1,138,389
Brentwood	18,905	50%	3,457,814	10,563,890
Bridgehampton	167	32%	15,389	38,216

District	P-12 enrollment	Test refusal (grades 3-8)	Potential Title I funding loss	Potential state aid loss
Center Moriches	1,683	58%	78,038	110,949
Central Islip	7,186	15%	1,355,439	4,926,396
Cold Spring Harbor	1,803	19%	44,506	429,823
Commack	6,921	56%	155,382	2,663,737
Comsewogue	3,757	79%	280,615	1,475,906
Connetquot	6,304	68%	301,435	2,634,109
Copiague	5,185	14%	938,024	4,324,402
Deer Park	4,220	43%	367,515	2,467,762
East Hampton	1,856	13%	117,677	185,758
East Islip	4,027	65%	140,146	1,484,604
East Moriches	743	44%	32,197	489,570
East Quogue	432	68%	53,342	-5,504
Eastport-South Manor	2,335	69%	106,314	2,163,070
Elwood	3,665	35%	201,862	828,743
Fire Island	36	33%	*	5,779
Fishers Island	69	0%	*	8,570
Greenport	683	61%	135,070	121,562
Half Hollow Hills	9,034	44%	452,605	2,173,914
Hampton Bays	2,198	29%	205,483	424,005
Harborfields	3,386	32%	102,607	654,561
Hauppauge	3,747	65%	207,293	1,547,495
Huntington	4,564	20%	572,093	1,549,384
Islip	2,926	62%	186,473	785,671
Kings Park	3,516	49%	96,976	1,008,126
Lindenhurst	6,169	57%	491,529	2,793,273
Little Flower	100	0%	55,583	n/a
Longwood	9,287	45%	912,561	3,851,348
Mattituck-Cutchogue	1,331	38%	39,280	146,755
Middle Country	10,183	67%	733,134	7,086,535
Miller Place	2,796	64%	286,046	291,475
Montauk	353	21%	46,166	115,066
Mount Sinai	2,387	51%	58,414	1,545,490
New Suffolk	17	14%	*	n/a
North Babylon	4,713	54%	389,240	3,437,258
Northport-East Northport	5,699	60%	168,926	835,908
Oysterponds	73	26%	32,442	3,073
Patchogue-Medford	7,909	67%	859,720	3,033,713
Port Jefferson	1,167	50%	41,422	337,425
Quogue	112	11%	*	3,953
Remsenburg-Speonk	170	58%	*	20,943
Riverhead	5,370	30%	759,276	1,868,232
Rocky Point	3,344	76%	193,613	1,226,235
Sachem	14,005	65%	694,470	6,092,585
Sag Harbor	1,011	32%	113,967	140,835
Sagaponack	12	0%	*	n/a
Sayville	3,024	72%	79,458	1,011,539
Shelter Island	221	42%	*	41,692
Shoreham-Wading River	2,407	69%	48,594	630,957
Smithtown	9,704	55%	293,431	2,156,897
South Country	4,569	65%	879,561	2,340,272
South Huntington	6,108	32%	601,060	1,741,334
Southampton	1,616	52%	114,057	218,419
Southold	842	60%	43,450	79,832
Springs	741	21%	212,444	293,309
Three Village	6,719	58%	152,659	1,650,408
Tuckahoe Common	348	20%	84,394	58,348
Wainscott	20	0%	10,863	n/a
West Babylon	4,011	53%	298,719	1,573,989
West Islip	4,628	62%	260,701	1,231,979
Westhampton Beach	1,870	36%	70,606	-105,877
William Floyd	9,027	40%	1,596,829	3,802,338
Wyandanch	2,392	11%	640,764	1,414,356
Nassau:	202,347	36% (average)	18,577,211	68,014,375
Suffolk:	247,275	43% (average)	22,455,524	100,502,561

SOURCE: Enclosure in Jan. 20 letter to Acting U.S. Education Secretary John B. King Jr. from Nassau County Council of School Superintendents, Suffolk County School Superintendents Association and Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents