



# New York Common Core Task Force Final Report



[www.ny.gov/programs/common-core-task-force](http://www.ny.gov/programs/common-core-task-force)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo



December 10, 2015



Dear Governor Cuomo,

On behalf of the members of the Common Core Task Force, I am pleased to present you with our report and recommendations for action regarding the implementation of the Common Core Standards and related curriculum and tests in New York State.

Your charge to the Task Force was clear: engage parents, teachers, students, and others to hear from them what is, and is not, working. You asked us to review the Standards, the related curriculum, and testing and make recommendations for improving these components to ensure that New York students have the opportunity to receive the highest quality education that prepares them for life and work in the 21st century.

We believe our report and recommendations reflect the thinking of a wide cross-section of citizens and education stakeholders around the State. Let me summarize the essence of our findings.

Education has undergone rapid changes over the past decade, including the 2009 federal Race to the Top Program and the Common Core Standards. Such rapid change, while extremely well intentioned, has, nevertheless caused confusion and upheaval in states across the nation, including in New York.

We took our charge seriously, and, as is to be expected with such an important task, there were many divergent perspectives offered for consideration; yet we found consensus with the findings summarized below.

First and foremost, the Task Force unanimously affirms the importance of adopting and maintaining high educational standards and rigorous performance measures to increase the competitive standing of, and therefore the opportunities for, all our students. Moreover, there was clear consensus that such standards should be designed to help our children to read, think and problem-solve in new, critical ways better adapted to this century than to the last. However, in the press to implement the Common Core Standards in New York beginning in 2009, the Task Force found that numerous mistakes were made. Repeatedly, testimony and public comments to us focused on the fact that educators were inundated with confusing information and new material without having first been brought into the process of developing how these new approaches were to be integrated into curricula and taught to students. And some of the new standards were simply inappropriate for certain student populations.

The Common Core Standards must be revisited to reflect the particular needs and priorities of State and local school districts and, building upon the foundation established by the Common Core Standards, high quality New York State Standards must be developed where necessary to meet the needs of our kids. Thereafter, new State curriculum resources and tests must be developed in a manner to better reflect the revised standards. This task will take the collaborative involvement of all the stakeholders in the education process, including the State Education Department, administrators, teachers, and parents alike.

New York has a chance to get it right—and we must. The work must start today but we estimate that the full implementation of the reforms requires a transition period. Until the start of the 2019-2020 school year, the Task Force recommends that results from assessments aligned to the current Common Core Standards, as well as the updated standards, be used to guide the process of further reform and to give us a notional indication that we are moving in the right direction, but that these results not be used to evaluate the performance of specific teachers or students until the new system is complete and implemented.

It is time to right the ship. We believe that these recommendations, once acted on, provide a means to that end. It is our belief that these recommendations provide the foundation to restore public trust in the education system in New York by improving what needs to be improved and building on our long history of excellence in public education. In this regard, the Task Force would like to recognize and thank Merryl Tisch, Chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents, for her dedication to this work and years of service to the students of this state.

The members of the Task Force and I thank you for trusting us with this critical charge and for giving us the opportunity to help chart the course forward for education in New York State.

Sincerely,  
Richard Parsons  
Chair  
Common Core Task Force





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*“Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education.”<sup>1</sup>*

*--President John F. Kennedy*

<sup>1</sup> John F. Kennedy Special Message to the Congress on Education. February 20, 1961.

## I. Executive Summary

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo formed the Common Core Task Force (Task Force) to undertake a comprehensive review of the current status and use of the Common Core State Standards in New York, and to recommend potential reforms to the system.

It is important to note that there have been a series of rapid reforms to the public education system in recent years, causing confusion and upheaval across the country – not just in New York. Since the federal Race to the Top Program in 2009, as part of a national movement to improve education, New York State joined more than 40 other states and adopted the Common Core State Standards. Many states have been grappling with how to implement these major changes without causing disruption to students. And many states have encountered similar problems to New York's. While the goals may have been noble, the implementation of the Common Core Standards and the rollout of associated curricula and tests in New York were rushed and improperly implemented. The result has been disruption and unneeded anxiety in our schools and for students, parents and educators.



The Task Force did exhaustive outreach and reviewed the Common Core Standards, curriculum, and tests to untangle the problems and develop a series of recommendations. The Task Force review included two public sessions with testimony from 10 presenters; nine listening sessions with open public testimony; a virtual student engagement session; outreach to hundreds of educators, parents, students, principals, superintendents, school board members, and other stakeholders; and a survey of other states' reviews. The Task Force heard testimony from more than 200 pre-K-12 educators, parents, students, and academics and reviewed the more than 1,800 written comments submitted through the Task Force website. Altogether, over 2,100 individuals submitted commentary to the Task Force. The Task Force also received input from outside advisors and advocates in the areas of standards, curriculum, assessments, and unique student populations.

After careful review, the Task Force affirms that New York must have rigorous, high quality education standards to improve the education of all of our students and hold our schools and districts accountable for students' success. However, it is well-established that there were significant issues with the roll-out and implementation of the Common Core Standards causing parents, educators, and other stakeholders to lose trust in the system.

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<sup>2</sup> The Task Force notes that the President recently signed into law the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Task Force is optimistic that any changes will give New York more latitude to implement the recommendations set forth in this report.



The Task Force has reviewed and discussed information presented at public sessions and submitted through the website, and has found the following major issues in the adoption and implementation of the Common Core Standards:

- The State’s original process to adopt the more than 1,500 Common Core Standards failed to include meaningful input by educators and was not done in a sufficiently open and transparent manner.
- The Common Core Standards may not be age-appropriate in early grades including K-2.
- The Common Core Standards do not adequately address unique student populations, such as English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities.
- The Standards are too rigid and need to be adaptable with more local school district and educator input.
- There was not enough time for teachers to develop curriculum aligned to the Common Core because much of the sample curriculum resources were not available until after the Common Core Standards were already adopted in schools.
- The State-provided curriculum created by the State Education Department (SED) is complicated and difficult to use.
- There is widespread belief that the curriculum does not allow for local district input, lacks breadth, and is too one-size-fits-all.
- There was a lack of State Education Department (SED) transparency and of parent, educator, and other stakeholder engagement in the development of the Common Core-aligned tests by the corporation hired by SED.
- There are concerns that students are spending too much time preparing for and taking tests and that teachers were only “teaching to the test.”
- The Common Core tests do not properly account for Students with Disabilities and create unnecessary duplicative testing for English Language Learners.



Accordingly, the Task Force recommends that the Common Core Standards should be revised to reflect the particular needs and priorities of New York State, and to address the serious barriers to successful implementation that have been identified by the Task Force. The Task Force makes the following 21 recommendations to properly implement a new system:

### **Establish New High Quality New York Standards**

- Recommendation 1:** Adopt high quality New York education standards with input from local districts, educators, and parents through an open and transparent process.
- Recommendation 2:** Modify early grade standards so they are age-appropriate.
- Recommendation 3:** Ensure that standards accommodate flexibility that allows educators to meet the needs of unique student populations, including Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners.
- Recommendation 4:** Ensure standards do not lead to the narrowing of curriculum or diminish the love of reading and joy of learning.
- Recommendation 5:** Establish a transparent and open process by which New York standards are periodically reviewed by educators and content area experts.

### **Develop Better Curriculum Guidance and Resources**

- Recommendation 6:** Ensure educators and local school districts have the flexibility to develop and tailor curriculum to the new standards.
- Recommendation 7:** Release updated and improved sample curriculum resources.
- Recommendation 8:** Launch a digital platform that enables teachers, including pre-service teachers, and teacher educators, to share resources with other teachers across the state.
- Recommendation 9:** Create ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers, teacher educators, and administrators on the revised State standards.

### **Significantly Reduce Testing Time and Preparation and Ensure Tests Fit Curriculum and Standards**

- Recommendation 10:** Involve educators, parents, and other education stakeholders in the creation and periodic review of all State standards-aligned exams and other State assessments.
- Recommendation 11:** Gather student feedback on the quality of the new tests.
- Recommendation 12:** Provide ongoing transparency to parents, educators, and local districts on the quality and content of all tests, including, but not limited to publishing the test questions.
- Recommendation 13:** Reduce the number of days and shorten the duration for standards-aligned State standardized tests.

**Recommendation 14:**

Provide teachers with the flexibility and support to use authentic formative assessments to measure student learning.

**Recommendation 15:**

Undertake a formal review to determine whether to transition to untimed tests for existing and new State standardized tests aligned to the standards.

**Recommendation 16:**

Provide flexibility for assessments of Students with Disabilities.

**Recommendation 17:**

Protect and enforce testing accommodations for Students with Disabilities.

**Recommendation 18:**

Explore alternative options to assess the most severely disabled students.

**Recommendation 19:**

Prevent students from being mandated into Academic Intervention Services based on a single test.

**Recommendation 20:**

Eliminate double testing for English Language Learners.

## Ensure a Successful Transition to a New System

As we know from experience, changing standards is not an easy or a quick task. Districts and teachers, with assistance from SED, will need to make adjustments to curriculum, and the State's system of assessments will require changes as well.

The Task Force finds the following steps should be taken to properly implement a new system for the nearly 700 school districts and 5,000 schools and more than 200,000 teachers and 2.65 million students in the state:

- A comprehensive review of the more than 1,500 standards in Common Core in an open and transparent manner with significant input by educators, parents, local districts and other education stakeholders, with careful consideration of the appropriateness of these standards in early childhood, and for Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners.
- After the comprehensive review of the Common Core Standards, there must be modification, elimination, or creation of standards to form rigorous New York-specific standards.
- Thereafter, the new standards must be reviewed in an open and transparent manner before adoption.
- After the standards are finalized, the State must engage educators to create and disseminate sample curriculum units.
- The State sample curricula must allow time to be modified by the 700 local school districts and 200,000 teachers in order to ease the transition to updated standards while ensuring that local educators have the flexibility to tailor instruction to the needs of their students.
- Adequate time must be allotted for the State to train local administrators and teacher educators on the new standards and develop their capacity in order to lead a seamless transition to the new system.
- Sufficient time for the State and local school districts to help educators unpack and understand the new standards, design curriculum to meet local needs, and adapt instruction.

- A parent engagement process at the local school district level about the new standards, local curriculum, and assessments.
- An overhaul of the current testing system, including reducing the duration and frequency of test days and increasing test transparency to help students, teachers, and parents understand results and use these to inform instruction and support student learning.
- The creation of new assessments aligned with the new standards that incorporate significant involvement of and input from teachers, teacher educators, local districts, and other education stakeholders.

To reiterate: the Task Force believes in high-quality education standards and accountability in education, but the current system needs to be overhauled. In order to finally get the system right there must be adequate time to implement the system.

**Recommendation 21: Until the new system is fully phased in, the results from assessments aligned to the current Common Core Standards, as well as the updated standards, shall only be advisory and not be used to evaluate the performance of individual teachers or students.**

Given the amount of work needed to get the new system right, the Task Force recommends that until the transition to a new system is complete, i.e. New York State-specific standards are fully developed along with corresponding curriculum and tests, State-administered standardized ELA and Mathematics assessments for grades three through eight aligned to the Common Core or updated standards shall not have consequences for individual students or teachers. Further, any growth model based on these Common Core tests or other state assessments shall not have consequences and shall only be used on an advisory basis for teachers. The transition phase shall last until the start of the 2019-2020 school year.

High standards are a pathway to a brighter future for all of our children but must be tailored to our students and our system. When combined with high quality, locally-driven teaching and assessments these high standards will ensure that every student in New York has access to a great education and a bright future. We believe that these recommendations will help do just that.





## II. Review Of The Common Core Standards

Today's generation of students face a much different world upon graduation than previous generations. Jobs in today's economy—especially in high demand fields—require a more advanced level of skill with a focus on strategic thinking. Competition in the marketplace is fierce both nationally and internationally. To compete, students must redirect their focus away from rote memorization and toward critical thinking and advanced analyses of challenging texts. It would be educational malpractice to stand still in the face of a rapidly changing world and job market.



Standards have always guided educational practice, whether at the state or national level. From the first schools in the 1600s to the Goals 2000 initiative in 1994, public education has continued to adapt and develop standards and principles.

More recently, to better prepare students for this changing landscape, in 2009 the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) spearheaded a state-led effort to develop rigorous education standards in partnership with governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia. Known as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS

or “the Standards”), these standards were developed to address existing gaps in student learning across the country, to better prepare students for college and career, and to address the lack of measurable, standardized proficiency across the states.<sup>3</sup>

This group of state school chiefs and governors recognized the value of consistent, real-world learning goals and launched the Common Core effort to ensure all students, regardless of where they live, are graduating high school prepared for life, college, and career.

Rather than focusing solely on what students should know at each grade level, the CCSS were designed with college- and career-readiness as the end goal of secondary schooling.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the Standards were designed by starting with the skills and knowledge students must acquire to prepare themselves for college while avoiding remedial classes, or to prepare graduates for “workplace-training programs for careers that offer competitive salaries.”<sup>5</sup>

By giving great weight to the foundational skills required in today's job market, education advocates believe that the Standards have the potential to begin to close the performance gaps that exist largely

<sup>3</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2015). Development Process. Retrieved November 26, 2015, from <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/development-process/>.

<sup>4</sup> Rothman, Robert, *Something in Common: The Common Core Standards and the Next Chapter in American Education*. (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2011), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Rothman, Robert, *Something in Common: The Common Core Standards and the Next Chapter in American Education*. (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2011), 10.



based on socio-economic differences.<sup>6</sup> Advocates also support high standards for all students so as not to implicitly lower expectations for some students.<sup>7</sup> As Dr. Willard Daggett of the International Center for Leadership in Education stated, “The answer is straightforward: higher standards mean an increased opportunity for all students.”<sup>8</sup> The National Council of La Raza supports high standards in New York as a means to “raise the bar for all of our children and present a vital opportunity to improve Latino student outcomes.”<sup>9</sup>

The NGA and CCSSO released the final standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects on June 2, 2010.<sup>10</sup>

In April 2009, New York State signed a Memorandum of Agreement with fifty other states and territories to participate in the national dialogue to develop these voluntary standards. Then in 2010, as part of its federal Race to the Top application, New York adopted the Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics which were phased in with an aggressive timeline targeting full implementation in the 2012-2013 school year.<sup>11</sup>

By the start of the 2012-13 school year, every New York public school district was required to have adopted and implemented the Common Core. However, SED resources were not fully available at the start of that school year, with very few curriculum modules posted on EngageNY.org.<sup>12</sup> This timing means that teachers were asked to implement and teach to an unavailable curriculum—an impossible task.

**Only a few curriculum modules were available online for teacher use during the 2012-13 school year and most modules were not made available until the start of the following school year.<sup>14</sup>**

New York schools administered the first Common Core-aligned State tests in April 2013.<sup>15</sup> The Task Force heard complaints of too much testing, too much time spent on test preparation, too little transparency in the release of questions, and delayed and unhelpful student score reports sent to teachers and parents.

New York is not alone in facing implementation issues surrounding Common Core. As of December 2013, 45 states had adopted the Common Core and were in the process of implementation.<sup>16</sup> Many states have recently taken steps to review or revise the Standards in response to public concerns about them, including Indiana, Florida, New Jersey, North Carolina and Tennessee, among others.

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<sup>6</sup> Levy, Frank, et al. (2015). *Third Way Next. Dancing with Robots: Human Skills for Computerized Work*. Retrieved November 20, 2015, from <http://content.thirdway.org/publications/714/Dancing-With-Robots.pdf>. Clark, Vincent. Buffalo Urban League. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 16, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Brookins Santelises, Sonja. Education Trust. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 20, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Daggett, W., Gendron S. (2015). International Center for Leadership in Education. *Transitioning Disrupt the Status Quo: Three Questions That Light the Way to Higher Standards*. Retrieved November 28, 2015, from [http://www.leadered.com/pdf/Transitioning\\_to\\_High\\_Standards\\_Solution\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.leadered.com/pdf/Transitioning_to_High_Standards_Solution_Brief.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> New York Common Core Fact Sheet. National Council of La Raza (2015). Retrieved November 27, 2015, from [http://publications.nclr.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/1035/FINAL\\_NY\\_Factsheet.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://publications.nclr.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/1035/FINAL_NY_Factsheet.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>10</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2015). Retrieved November 27, 2015, from <http://www.corestandards.org/>.

<sup>11</sup> The Board of Regents preliminarily adopted the entire Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts in July 2010. In January 2011, the Board of Regents formally approved and adopted the NYS P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy and the NYS P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for Mathematics that included permitted additions to the standards as well as the New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core.

<sup>12</sup> SED Curriculum Module Updates. Retrieved November 25, 2015, from <https://www.engageny.org/resource/curriculum-module-updates>.

<sup>14</sup> Board of Regents Meeting November. (2011). *Implementation of the Common Core Standards*. Retrieved November 24, 2015, from <http://regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/documents/meetings/2011Meetings/November2011/1111p12d2.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> According to the test results, only 31.1 percent of students grades 3 through 8 across the state met the ELA and Mathematics Common Core proficiency levels. This was down from the 2011-12 test results that deemed 55.1 percent of New York 3-8 students as meeting English proficiency standards and 64.8 percent meeting the Mathematics proficiency standard.

<sup>16</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2015). Retrieved November 27, 2015, from <http://www.corestandards.org/>.

## State-Level Review of the Common Core

| STATE                 | ACTION  |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Florida</b>        | Florida adopted more than 100 revisions to the Common Core State Standards to adapt them to Florida learners following a large-scale review and series of public hearings. <sup>17</sup>  |
| <b>Indiana</b>        | Indiana became the first state to withdraw from the Common Core consortium in 2014 <sup>18</sup> and adopted new standards for ELA and Mathematics validated by state education stakeholders. <sup>19</sup>   |
| <b>Louisiana</b>      | The Louisiana Governor and legislature enacted legislation to direct the Education Commissioner to review and develop new standards from 2015-2016. <sup>20</sup> The Education Commissioner also conducted an online survey to gather public feedback on specific standards. <sup>21</sup>     |
| <b>Maine</b>          | The Maine Education Commissioner created a 24-member panel in 2014 to engage the public, evaluate, and make recommendations on the Common Core Standards. <sup>22</sup>   |
| <b>New Jersey</b>     | The New Jersey Governor appointed a committee to review the Common Core Standards and make recommendations regarding revisions before January 2016. The State Education Commissioner also conducted a public online survey to gather public input on specific standards. <sup>23</sup>          |
| <b>North Carolina</b> | The North Carolina legislature created a committee to review the Common Core Standards, gather public input, and make recommendations to the legislature before December 2015. <sup>24</sup>  |
| <b>Oklahoma</b>       | Oklahoma enacted legislation to repeal the Common Core Standards and revert to its previous Oklahoma standards. School districts retain the option to teach to the Common Core or the Oklahoma standards. <sup>25</sup>   |
| <b>Pennsylvania</b>   | The Pennsylvania Governor ordered a delay in the implementation of the Pennsylvania Common Core Standards in 2013 in order for the State to conduct a review and make modifications. <sup>26</sup> Approved revisions to the PA Core Standards went into effect on March 1, 2014. <sup>27</sup> |
| <b>Tennessee</b>      | The Tennessee Governor appointed a committee in 2014 to review the Common Core Standards, gather public input, and make recommendations before January 2016. <sup>28</sup>  |

<sup>17</sup> Florida Department of Education (2015). Florida Standards. Retrieved November 30, 2015, from <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/standards/florida-standards>.

<sup>18</sup> S.B. 91, 118th Leg. Sess. (Ind. 2014) (enacted), available at <https://iga.in.gov/static-documents/3/3/8/3388921d/SB0091.06.ENRS.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Indiana Department of Education (2015). Indiana Academic Standards. Retrieved November 30, 2015, from <http://www.doe.in.gov/standards>.

<sup>20</sup> H.B. 373, 2015 Leg. Sess. (La. 2015) (enacted), available at <http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=960245>.

<sup>21</sup> Louisiana Believes Department of Education (2015). Online Portal Opens for Public Comment During Louisiana Student Standards Review Process. Retrieved November 30, 2015, from <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/newsroom/news-releases/2015/07/08/online-portal-opens-for-public-comment-during-louisiana-student-standards-review-process>.

<sup>22</sup> Maine Department of Education (2014). Improving Maine's Learning Standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts. Retrieved November 30, 2015, from <http://www.maine.gov/doe/standardsreview/>.

<sup>23</sup> New Jersey Department of Education (2014). Christie Administration Announces Opportunities for Public Input on Academic Standards Review. Retrieved November 30, 2015, from <http://www.nj.gov/education/news/2015/0902stand.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> S.B. 812, 2013 Leg. Sess. (N.C. 2014) (enacted), available at <http://www.doa.nc.gov/asrc/documents/SB812.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> H.B. 3399, 54th Leg. Sess. (Okla. 2014) (enacted), available at [http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/cf\\_pdf/2013-14%20ENR/hB/HB3399%20ENR.PDF](http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/cf_pdf/2013-14%20ENR/hB/HB3399%20ENR.PDF).

<sup>26</sup> H.R. 338, 2013 Leg. Sess. (Pa. 2013), available at <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PDF&sessYr=2013&essInd=0&billBody=H&billTyp=R&billNbr=0338&pn=2084>.

<sup>27</sup> Pennsylvania Department of Education (2015). PA Core Standards Implementation. Retrieved November 30, 2015, from <http://www.pdesas.org/Standard/PACore>.

<sup>28</sup> TN State Board of Education (2015). Committees and Initiatives: Standards Review. Retrieved November 30, 2015, from <https://www.tn.gov/sbe/topic/standards-review>.



The Task Force heard repeatedly from a variety of stakeholders that there were considerable issues with New York's rushed adoption and implementation of the Standards. While many states staggered elements of implementation to give school districts and educators time to develop curriculum and aligned assessments, New York did everything at the same time.

The Board of Regents adopted the Common Core in January 2011 but SED did not post the majority of the entire standards-aligned curriculum resources before the start of the 2012-2013 school year, leaving teachers unable to adapt or select curriculum, update their lesson plans and routine assessments of student learning, or rearrange classroom learning to be Standards-aligned. Further, SED required students to take new Common Core-aligned tests in Spring 2013, the first year of Common Core instruction, before students and teachers had time to adjust to these new standards.

Repeated testimony and public comments to the Task Force focused on the fact that educators were bombarded with confusing information and new material without first understanding why it was important for our children to read, think, and problem solve in new, more critical ways. Due to these missteps, thousands of parents, educators, and other education stakeholders now associate the phrase Common Core with this rushed and failed attempt at implementation that caused undue disruption in our schools.

It is time to fix what is broken and provide all stakeholders the time and support they need to create a system of standards, curriculum, and assessments that works for our students, parents, and teachers.



### III. Analysis & Recommendations

Throughout the course of the Task Force’s work, the members held two executive sessions; two public panel presentations; nine regional listening sessions; one virtual student engagement session; and several smaller, more focused internal work groups.<sup>29</sup> The Task Force also received and reviewed more than 2,100 comments and pieces of testimony and engaged outside advisors and advocates in the areas of standards,

curriculum, assessments, and unique student populations.

The overwhelming response from students, parents, elected officials, community members, teachers, administrators, academics, and professional education organizations is indicative of the magnitude of concern and desire of New Yorkers to get it right.

The Task Force synthesized and analyzed this stakeholder feedback and has broken out its recommendations into four categories, as follows.



#### Issue One: Establish New High Quality New York Standards

The Governor charged the Task Force with reviewing and reforming New York’s Common Core Standards for ELA and Mathematics. There are currently more than 1,500 individual standards in New York that span pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade.

The Task Force has learned that New York educators had limited input<sup>30</sup> into the Common Core before their formal adoption in New York. It is now time to revisit and revise the Standards and engage an expanded group of local stakeholders, including school districts, in an open and transparent process to ensure that New York’s educational standards work for every student, teacher, and parent and are guided by our needs, not those of another state or the federal government.

SED launched the AIMHighNY survey of the Common Core on October 21, 2015. The survey accepted submissions through November 30, 2015, and more than 10,500 respondents commented on specific Standards, providing recommendations as to how SED could modify them.

Common themes that emerged from the Department’s public comment period centered on discrete grade levels and unique learners, including the developmental appropriateness of the P-2 Standards and concerns about Standards alignment, and appropriateness for Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners.

The public input to the Task Force mirrored the findings of the AIMHighNY survey and supported the importance of high, strong standards, but raised several specific concerns related to developmental appropriateness and different types of learners that must be addressed.

<sup>29</sup> The Task Force organized itself into three work groups focused on standards, curriculum and assessments.

<sup>30</sup> National Governors Association. (2015). Common Core State Standards Development Work Group and Feedback Group Announced. Retrieved November 16, 2015, from [http://www.nga.org/cms/home/news-room/news-releases/page\\_2009/col2-content/main-content-list/title\\_common-core-state-standards-development-work-group-and-feedback-group-announced.html](http://www.nga.org/cms/home/news-room/news-releases/page_2009/col2-content/main-content-list/title_common-core-state-standards-development-work-group-and-feedback-group-announced.html).

The Task Force heard about the importance of strong standards from stakeholders such as the Council for a Strong America,<sup>31</sup> the New York State Business Council,<sup>32</sup> and a New York higher education administrator<sup>33</sup> who are focused on how best to prepare students for college and career. These stakeholders raised issues of college remediation, the skills gap between employers and high school graduates, and concerns about military preparedness as it relates to teaching and learning standards. Students also support high standards that will help them achieve their post-high school goals.<sup>34</sup>

In 2015, more than 25 civil rights groups signed a letter in support of high standards for all students that emphasized the importance of having high standards so that disadvantaged students would not fall through the cracks.<sup>35</sup> This point of view was also echoed by testimony from the President of the New York Urban League at the New York City listening session, who noted that statewide high standards help to ensure that the public education system serves low-income and minority children.<sup>36</sup> Even vocal opponents of the Common Core have noted that although they may not support the implementation of and assessments related to the Common Core, they are in favor of high standards for students and accountability for schools and districts.



College professors, such as Dr. Linda Sturges<sup>37</sup> at SUNY Maritime College and Dr. Angela Pagano<sup>38</sup> at SUNY Cortland, emphasized the importance of college readiness and shared with Task Force members that many graduates of New York high schools require intensive remedial courses upon starting four-year college that lead to increased expense and time to completion for the student. According to The State University of New York, each year about 50 percent of first-year students at two-year colleges and 20 percent of those entering four-year universities require basic developmental courses before they can begin credit-bearing coursework.<sup>39</sup> This slows student progress, prevents many students from successfully transitioning to college, and results in great expense to students.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>31</sup> O'Connor, Jenn. Council for a Strong America. Capital District Regional Listening Session. November 6, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Lindell, Sonia. The Business Council of New York State, Inc. Written Testimony from Common Core Task Force Website. November 6, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Clarkson University Administrator. Written Testimony from Common Core Task Force Website. November 10, 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Andreea Musteata. Email Exchange with Task Force Staff. November 30, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Ed Trust. (2015). More Than 25 Civil Rights Groups and Education Advocates Release Principles for ESEA Reauthorization: "The Federal Role Must Be Honored and Maintained". January 11, 2015. Retrieved November 27, 2015 from [https://edtrust.org/press\\_release/more-than-20-civil-rights-groups-and-education-advocates-release-principles-for-esea-reauthorization-the-federal-role-must-be-honored-and-maintained/](https://edtrust.org/press_release/more-than-20-civil-rights-groups-and-education-advocates-release-principles-for-esea-reauthorization-the-federal-role-must-be-honored-and-maintained/).

<sup>36</sup> Rice, Arva. Urban League. New York City Regional Listening Session. November 6, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Sturges, Linda. Professor of Mathematics, SUNY Maritime College. Common Core Task Force Public Session. October 29, 2015. Retrieved November 30, 2015, from <http://www.nj.gov/education/news/2015/0902stand.htm>.

<sup>38</sup> Pagano, Angela. Associate Professor of Biological Sciences, SUNY Cortland. Standards Work Group Conference Call with Task Force Members and Task Force Staff. November 17, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Higher Ed for Higher Standards. (2015). Proficient Means Prepared Toolkit. Retrieved November 18, 2015, from <http://higheredforhigherstandards.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ProficientMeansPrepared-Toolkit.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> The State spends more than \$70M annually on remedial coursework for State University of New York community college students; those same students spend approximately \$93M in tuition, \$39M in the form of student loans, on remedial courses to re-teach what they should have mastered in high school. SUNY Pathway to Success: Report of the SUNY Task Force on Remediation (2012).



However, many parents and teachers of students in early grades have expressed concerns that early grade standards are not developmentally appropriate for younger learners. In fact, over 150 comments from the Common Core Task Force website expressed concern over the developmental appropriateness of the Standards. These stakeholders are often worried about whether the Standards expect too much of young students whose brains may develop on different timelines. Others noted that a focus on Common Core instruction may limit free play and the development of social skills.



Stakeholders also repeatedly expressed concern with regard to how the Standards support and address unique student populations such as English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities. Specifically, Dr. Ofelia Garcia, a professor of bilingual education at CUNY Graduate Center believes that the Common Core Standards are an improvement for English Language Learners because they focus on speaking and listening, not just reading and writing. However, she believes that the Standards do not fully support bilingual learners because they are overly prescriptive with regard to concrete skills such as grammar.<sup>41</sup> A teacher of Students with Interrupted Formal Education in Utica noted, “English Language Learners who are still learning to read in English might require more time on more fundamental literacy skills.”<sup>42</sup> A teacher of Students with Disabilities stated that,

“If the student was already behind under the old standards, now he is two more grade levels behind.”<sup>43</sup> However, a superintendent in the Capital Region disagreed, noting that the Standards have instead promoted individualized instruction that is appropriate for each child.<sup>44</sup>

Parents and teachers have stated that the narrow focus on ELA and Mathematics in the Standards has diminished the joy in learning, inhibited creativity, and taken time away from other subjects. A parent at the Capital Region listening session said that at her daughter’s school, “they have ELA and Mathematics for two periods every day, and Science and Social Studies only every other day.”<sup>45</sup> Other parents and teachers have said that the Standards have limited the amount of time students have for subjects such as art and music. In addition, ELA teachers have said that the Standards’ focus on informational texts has made it difficult to teach students to love reading. The Task Force Student Ambassador relayed that the Standards had diminished students’ excitement for learning “because they and their teachers are discouraged from pursuing and teaching topics about which they are passionate.”<sup>46</sup>

Educators have suggested that one of the problems with the implementation of the Common Core has been that they got a brand new set of standards but minimal time to implement them in the classroom. These educators propose that the Standards serve as a living document that should be revisited and revised every few years with significant educator input and sufficient time for implementation.

<sup>41</sup> Garcia, Ofelia. Professor in the Ph.D. programs of Urban Education and of Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures and Languages, Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 19, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Teacher. Mohawk Valley Region. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 4, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Teacher. Southern Tier Region. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 2, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Standards Work Group Conference Call with Task Force Members and Task Force Staff. November 17, 2015.

<sup>45</sup> Parent. Capital District Regional Listening Session. November 6, 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Andreea Musteata. Email Exchange with Task Force Staff. November 30, 2015.

Based on the Task Force’s review of the Common Core, its engagement with stakeholders, and the findings of the AIMHighNY Standards survey the Task Force recommends that New York hold standards high but overhaul the current standards and replace them where necessary with new high quality New York standards that work for students, educators, parents, and all invested stakeholders in New York State. Specifically, the Task Force recommends the following:

**Recommendation 1: Adopt high quality New York education standards with input from local districts, educators, and parents through an open and transparent process.**

Several states have abandoned or significantly modified the Common Core State Standards based on the need to differentiate expectations and standards for their own students.

We need high quality standards that illustrate and support New York’s commitment to strong college and career readiness and continued learning of all students upon high school graduation. We must ensure that we maintain high expectations for all students, no matter where they live or their personal circumstances as well as school- and district-level accountability.

New York should build on the feedback it has received through this Task Force and the AIMHighNY Standards survey to engage educators to create a revised set of standards in 2016. These standards should be educator-driven and incorporate New York’s commitment to rigorous expectations for all students yet maintain the key instructional shifts set forth in the Common Core Standards.

These revised State standards must be more than a name change – instead, they should contain substantial revisions based on feedback from experts and stakeholders as outlined in this report. The revision process should be educator-driven and expand local educator and other stakeholder input in an open and transparent manner to ensure that the standards are customized to the needs and goals of New York, not the federal government, and incorporate high expectations for every New York student.

**Recommendation 2: Modify early grade standards so they are age-appropriate.**

Parents and teachers of younger students in grades K-2 have reported that the Standards are too challenging for young learners, and require concrete thinking and skills for which they may not yet be ready. For instance, Kindergarten standard RF.K.4 requires students to read emergent-reader text with purpose and understanding.<sup>47</sup> Yet, early education experts agree that children’s brains develop at different rates and not every student will be able to read by the end of kindergarten.<sup>48</sup> Common complaints relate to the Standards being age- or developmentally inappropriate for young learners and overly inflexible in their expectations.



<sup>47</sup> New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for ELA and Literacy. (2011). Retrieved December 3, 2015, from <http://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-p-12-common-core-learning-standards-for-english-language-arts-and-literacy>.

<sup>48</sup> Reading is Fundamental. (2015). Literacy Milestones Birth to Age 6. Retrieved December 2, 2015, from <http://www.rif.org/books-activities/tips-resources/literacy-milestones-birth-to-6/>.

PBS Parents. (2015). Kindergarten Reading Milestones. Retrieved December 2, 2015, from <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/reading-language/reading-milestones/kindergarten-language-development-milestones/kindergarten-reading/>. United States Department of Education. (2005). Helping Your Child Become a Reader. Retrieved December 2, 2015, from <https://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/reader/reader.pdf>.

Specifically, Sherry Cleary, the Executive Director of the New York Early Childhood Advisory Council, shared that one of the main concerns with the Kindergarten Standards is that they fail to include all of the domains of the Pre-Kindergarten Standards such as social and emotional development or approaches to learning.<sup>49</sup> For instance, the Pre-Kindergarten Standards are organized into groups of skills, including non-academic skills such as social and emotional development. As part of its review, the State should work to incorporate these components into the Kindergarten Standards to encourage curiosity and creativity in our youngest students.

The State should also explore the possibility of “banding” standards in the early grades (e.g. Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Standards, First and Second Grade Standards) to allow instructional flexibility for these teachers and students. The Common Core State Standards already bands standards together in the secondary years (e.g. standards for ninth and tenth grades) to give educators the instructional flexibility to meet individual needs of students.



The Kindergarten Standards could be revised and combined with the Pre-Kindergarten Foundation for the Common Core to provide pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers with the flexibility to differentiate instruction for students whose brains are rapidly developing. A similar process would then occur for grades one and two.

Instead of lowering expectations for children, banding would transition the focus from reaching prescribed benchmarks at a predetermined time to focusing on continuous growth and development. We know that students develop at different rates, and we want to ensure that teachers can differentiate and individualize instruction given to our youngest students that is developmentally appropriate for each individual child—not linked solely to the child’s age.

The State must engage the expertise of a range of child psychologists, pediatricians and child educational development experts in the creation of its revised standards to ensure that the expectations of the new standards are developmentally appropriate for the age of the students and organized to be responsive to students’ readiness and ability to learn.

**Recommendation 3: Ensure that standards accommodate flexibility that allows educators to meet the needs of unique student populations, including Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners.**

New York must have high standards for all students, but instruction must also be accessible to all students. The Task Force heard from several special educators who said that as the Standards became more rigorous, they left Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners behind.

As part of the State’s statutory review of the standards, it must seek the expertise of educators of Students with Disabilities and bilingual and English as a Second Language educators to validate that the standards and aligned curriculum resources are meeting the needs of these children and striking the balance between high expectations and appropriate flexibility.

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<sup>49</sup> Cleary, Sherry. New York Early Childhood Advisory Council. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 24, 2015.



The State must ensure that every student is prepared to succeed after high school. However, the Task Force heard from many experienced special educators such as Dr. Betsy Bernabe<sup>50</sup> of Camden Central Schools and Ashli Dreher<sup>51</sup> of the Lewiston-Porter Central School District that students who do not meet the requirements of the Regents diploma have limited options.

Currently, such students have the option to pursue the achievement of a non-diploma option such as the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential or the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential.<sup>52</sup> Stakeholders have reported that community colleges and most employers do not consider these credentials equivalent to a diploma, restricting employment and post-secondary educational opportunities for certain students with disabilities. The State should engage with special educators and parents to investigate alternatives to a credential for Students with Disabilities and Overage and Under-Credited students.<sup>53</sup>

**Recommendation 4: Ensure standards do not lead to the narrowing of curriculum or diminish the love of reading and joy of learning.**

Many parents and teachers have expressed concern that the Common Core State Standards have led to the reduction of time devoted to other subjects such as history, social studies, science, art, music, and physical education. Similar concerns have been expressed regarding the emphasis on non-fiction at the expense of literature, reading books for pleasure, and creative writing.

The new standards must help prepare students for a future that requires workplace and analytic skills, reading non-fiction, and new learning in technology applications. However, the standards must guide curriculum to fulfill these needs while still allowing for other texts that focus on creativity and cultural competency.

The State must draft new standards that recognize the balance between encouraging the development of the whole child while maximizing instructional time in school. The standards must also be flexible enough to provide professional teachers with latitude in the development of units and lessons and to incorporate local curriculum priorities.

*“It is very important that the Standards be used as a guide, not as a straitjacket.”<sup>54</sup>*

*– Linda Darling-Hammond, Western New York Public Session*

<sup>50</sup> Bernabe, Dr. Betsy. Teacher, Camden Central School District. Unique Student Population Work Group Conference Call with Task Force Members and Staff. November 19, 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Dreher, Ashli. Teacher, Lewiston-Porter Central School District. 2014 Teacher of the Year. Unique Student Population Work Group Conference Call with Task Force Members and Staff. November 19, 2015.

<sup>52</sup> The Skills and Achievement Commencement credential is available for severely disabled students who are assessed using the New York State Alternate Assessment.

<sup>53</sup> Overage and Under-Credited Students are students who are off track to graduate by two years or more based on the number of credits earned and their age. Under New York State Education Law (4405), students can remain in school until the end of the school year in which they turn 21.

<sup>54</sup> Darling-Hammond, Linda. Faculty Director, Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education. Common Core Task Force Western New York Public Session. November 18, 2015.



**Recommendation 5: Establish a transparent and open process by which New York standards are periodically reviewed by educators and content area experts.**

As we work to prepare students for career and college readiness, we must also remember that the world in which we live, and the skills students need to succeed, are rapidly changing. Accordingly, the standards must not be set in stone.

No different from curriculum review cycles used by local school districts and states, the State Education Department must establish a periodic cycle of review for academic standards ensuring educator participation, parent and community comment period, adequate time for teachers and administrators to

unpack and learn the standards, and finally, the design of curriculum to align with standards and guide classroom practice.

The State must engage practicing educators to review the standards on a continuous, transparent cycle to examine the integrity and relevance of standards with input from other teachers, teacher educators, administrators, professional academic organizations, and parents, as well as clinicians and specialists in child development, teaching children new languages, and educating children with disabilities.

Furthermore, this cycle of review should be followed by sufficient time for professional development, phase in of standards and commensurate curriculum, and professional development to ensure the integrity of the standards upon the next review.

**Issue Two: Develop Better Curriculum Guidance and Resources**

At the outset, it is important to clear up a common misconception that the Task Force heard repeated at every public session – the Standards are not curricula. Rather, standards serve as a guidepost for educators to use when locally selecting and/or developing curricula. This curriculum then serves as a framework for developing the school year scope and sequence, units of instruction, and daily lessons.

Curriculum includes everything that a teacher utilizes to develop units of study, daily lessons, classroom resources, and assessments to measure student progress. Teachers develop and select elements of curriculum within the context of student learning goals and objectives established by state and local authorities.

State education regulations require that every student be provided the opportunity to receive instruction to achieve the approved New York Standards, whatever form they take. However, local school districts determine how to deliver instruction to their students, including the development or selection of curriculum, textbooks and other instructional materials.<sup>55</sup> This process is in contrast to states like Tennessee, where the State Board of Education creates an approved list of textbooks from which school districts can make selections.<sup>56</sup> However, during the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, SED created and issued specific Standards-aligned curricula and instructional guidance that some parents, teachers, and administrators perceived as mandatory and diminishing local control over the curriculum.

<sup>55</sup> New York State Education Department. (2010). “New York State Learning Standards.” Retrieved November 24, 2015, from <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/lscorhistory.html>.

<sup>56</sup> Tennessee Department of Education. (2015). Textbook Service. Retrieved November 25, 2015, from <https://www.tn.gov/education/section/textbook-services>.



The Task Force also heard a great deal of confusion about the EngageNY curriculum resources and instructional modules from parents and educators. SED has said many times that districts were not, and are not, required to use the modules, and that they are instead example lessons. However, teachers have reported that their districts have told them that they must use the Department modules for curriculum. One teacher told us that she has been told to use the modules as a word-for-word script, despite the fact that she teaches English Language Learners who have difficulty with the language.<sup>57</sup> Mary Wills, a teacher in Ogdensburg City Schools, suggested to Task Force members that any State-created curriculum examples should also include resources for differentiation and individualization, as students need to be taught based on their needs.<sup>58</sup> Maria May, a literacy coach in Ramapo Central Schools, echoed Ms. Wills' concerns regarding the lack of differentiation and also noted issues related to overly accelerated pacing of the Standards and aligned curriculum.<sup>59</sup> The Task Force received more than 200 comments from stakeholders who are disappointed with the quality of the modules, with specific concerns raised related to the quality of sample student worksheets.

Dr. Kristin Wilcox's research out of SUNY Albany on high poverty, high proficiency schools has determined that schools that were able to adapt the modules to meet the needs of their students had higher test scores on the 3-8 ELA and Mathematics exams.<sup>60</sup> The Task Force also heard about pacing issues with the modules from educators who noted that many of the modules take 60 minutes to deliver, while most class periods are 45 minutes. Overall, stakeholders reiterated the need for districts and educators to have and exercise local control over curricular decisions.

Many stakeholders have stated that the EngageNY.org website is overloaded with information and difficult to navigate for teachers and parents. Stakeholders have suggested that SED streamline the website to make it easier to navigate.

Teachers, teacher educators, principals, and superintendents have all expressed the need for more focused professional development. At the public sessions, Schodack Superintendent Robert Horan<sup>61</sup> and Sleepy Hollow High School English Department Chair Judy Kelly<sup>62</sup> discussed the importance of teacher collaboration and Assistant Principal Erika Gunderson of P.S. 172 Beacon School of Excellence<sup>63</sup> described the 80-minute weekly professional development sessions in her school. The quality of professional development matters; teachers have expressed their preference for teacher-led, classroom-embedded professional development supported by strong school principals who create a school culture that supports collaboration and personalized learning instead of one-shot workshops led by outsiders.

These stakeholders have also expressed a need for professional development along the entire continuum of a teacher's career, not just once they enter the classroom, including a teacher candidate who does not feel as if her teacher preparation program is adequately preparing her to teach to the Standards.<sup>64</sup> The Task Force also heard from a school administrator who believes that the State should require college and university teacher preparation program faculty to partner with K-12 teachers to ensure that these programs deliver the skills teachers need and also incorporate clinical training and practice.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Teacher. Mohawk Valley Region. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 4, 2015.

<sup>58</sup> Wills, Mary. Teacher, Ogdensburg Central School District. Curriculum Work Group Conference Call with Task Force Members and Task Force Staff. November 16, 2015.

<sup>59</sup> May, Maria. Literacy Coach, Ramapo Central School District. Curriculum Work Group Conference Call with Task Force Members and Task Force Staff. November 16, 2015.

<sup>60</sup> Wilcox, Kristin, et al. (2015). SUNY Albany. Odds Beating Schools in the Common Core Era. Retrieved November 2, 2015, from <http://www.albany.edu/nykids/files/CASDA.11.2.2015.final.final.revised.pdf>; [http://www.albany.edu/nykids/files/Brief\\_MS\\_Xcase.NYKids.pdf](http://www.albany.edu/nykids/files/Brief_MS_Xcase.NYKids.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> Horan, Robert. Superintendent, Schodack Central School District. Common Core Task Force Public Session. October 29, 2015.

<sup>62</sup> Kelly, Judy. High School English Department Chair, Sleepy Hollow High School. Common Core Task Force Public Session. October 29, 2015.

<sup>63</sup> For more information about P.S. 172 Beacon School of Excellence's unique approach to curriculum development please see Appendix B.

<sup>64</sup> Teacher Candidate. Southern Tier. Written Testimony from Common Core Task Force Website. November 10, 2015.

<sup>65</sup> New York City School Administrator. Written Testimony from Common Core Task Force Website. October 11, 2015.

Teachers, particularly ELA and Mathematics teachers, have expressed that they feel that they alone must carry the load of Common Core-aligned instruction and are ill-supported by their building and district administrators. They have stated that administrators must be more prepared to help support educators to teach across the curriculum.

**Recommendation 6: Ensure educators and local school districts have the flexibility to develop and tailor curriculum to the new standards.**

Stakeholders have noted that the State modules should not be one-size-fits-all. In fact, research and stakeholder engagement have suggested that higher-performing schools gave teachers autonomy with respect to curriculum and instructional decisions. These districts did not require teachers to adopt the State-provided curriculum modules without modification and instead allowed them to alter the modules or otherwise design or select their own curriculum to provide for differentiation and individualization. At the Western New York Public Session, the Task Force heard from expert presenters that the key to success in using the modules is for districts to allow teachers to adapt them to meet the needs of their own students.<sup>66</sup> The State should prohibit districts from requiring teachers to use State-provided modules without modification to allow professional educators to exercise flexibility and discretion in curriculum decisions that serve the students they know best.

**Recommendation 7: Release updated and improved sample curriculum resources.**

The current EngageNY website is content-heavy, but sprawling and difficult to navigate, especially for a new user. Further, stakeholders have noted quality issues with existing modules. The State Education Department must first evaluate the quality of existing online resources and engage educators in the review of examples of quality curriculum being utilized in school districts and next create a streamlined, user-friendly website that delivers information in a concise and accessible manner for teachers, pre-service teachers, teacher educators, parents, and students. The State Education Department should routinely monitor and update any and all online resources based on input from educators and stakeholders.

**Recommendation 8: Launch a digital platform that enables teachers, including pre-service teachers and teacher educators, to share resources with other teachers across the state.**

Teachers and students are not one-size-fit-all. So why are our modules? The curriculum modules on the EngageNY website should serve only as suggested guidance for teachers who want extra direction in preparing a lesson that is aligned with the Standards.

Importantly, standards should provide space for teacher flexibility and creativity. In fact, research has shown that odds-beating schools allowed their teachers to tailor the modules to their students rather than follow them lockstep.<sup>67</sup> The State should empower teachers to share their professional wisdom and work product by building and launching a statewide platform for collaboration and sharing of curriculum, instructional strategies, texts, and authentic assessments. This platform will offer an easy way for teachers to collaborate across districts and subject areas and may also help offset some local expenses related to curriculum development. The platform should also integrate and leverage other similar resources to create a seamless experience for educators.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Hightower, Dirk. Executive Director, Children’s Institute; Gunderson, Erika. Assistant Principal, P.S. 172 Beacon School of Excellence. Western New York Common Core Task Force Public Session. November 18, 2015.

<sup>67</sup> Wilcox, Kristen, et. al. (2015). Odds-beating Schools in the Common Core Era. Retrieved November 17, 2015, from [http://www.albany.edu/education/education\\_images/EDU\\_Odds-beating\\_Schools\\_082815.pdf](http://www.albany.edu/education/education_images/EDU_Odds-beating_Schools_082815.pdf).

<sup>68</sup> The Task Force learned that the American Federation of Teachers is preparing to re-launch Share My Lesson, a nationwide digital resource-sharing platform and also heard from educators that informal local listserv exchanges already exist. Teacher. Central New York Regional Listening Session. November 10, 2015.

This platform should also allow teachers and teacher educators to share recommended texts with other teachers across the state. The Standards provide teachers with flexibility with respect to what texts are used in a classroom yet many teachers have voiced concerns that the texts currently used lack cultural relevance for their students or fail to promote social awareness. Teachers can use this platform to easily share texts with other educators that they believe are grade appropriate, standards-aligned, socially-conscious, and culturally relevant.

**Recommendation 9: Create ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers, teacher educators, and administrators on the revised State standards.**



The State, school districts, BOCES, and higher education teacher preparation programs should collaborate to design and deliver ongoing high quality professional development that goes beyond one-shot workshops with experts and consultants to help teachers and teacher educators determine how best to teach their students to the new standards. These stakeholders should borrow elements of successful district professional development in the design of this new approach, including significant teacher collaboration, the use of teacher leaders, and building teacher connections between experienced and novice teachers.

Further, pre-service teacher preparation programs at New York colleges and universities must work with K-12 educators and administrators to fully embed principles of standards-aligned curriculum development, instruction, and assessment in the course of study for teacher candidates. To ensure that every student has access to a great teacher, the State must first change its vision of teacher education and professional development. The best teachers continuously develop – they are selectively recruited, clinically trained, coached and mentored, and participate in high quality professional development over the course of their careers.

The State, BOCES, and teacher preparation programs should also provide ongoing professional development and support tailored to school district superintendents and district administrators to ensure that they are fully prepared to lead and support their staff in the transition to the new standards. These programs must also help administrators learn to incorporate research-based practices and academic rigor into all components of curriculum development, professional development, and assessment design and selection aligned to the standards.

Further, all professional development and training must ensure that teachers in all subjects and all administrators share in the responsibility of preparing students to meet the new standards. For students to fully benefit from higher standards, teachers and administrators must be trained to ensure that every teacher in a building embraces and aligns instruction to the standards, no matter what grade and subject they teach.



### **Issue Three: Significantly Reduce Testing Time and Preparation and Ensure Tests Fit Curriculum and Standards**

Teachers have been assessing students for as long as we have had teachers and students. As simply stated by a teacher in the Central New York listening session, “Teachers like tests. We invented them.”<sup>69</sup>

When it adopted the Common Core, New York initially joined the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, a consortium of 24 states that came together to create a series of aligned 3-8 ELA and Mathematics assessments.<sup>70</sup>

In 2011, New York decided to create and administer tests developed specifically for New York students and awarded a private testing company, Pearson, a \$32.1 million contract over five years to develop and administer the new Common Core-aligned 3-8 exams in ELA and Mathematics.<sup>71</sup> In the 2012-2013 school year, the State administered the first Pearson-created, Common Core-aligned exams.

In July 2015, SED announced that instead of re-awarding the contract to Pearson, SED would enter into a five-year contract with a Minnesota based company, Questar Assessment, Inc. (Questar), for \$44 million.<sup>72</sup> Questar will develop field tests for the 2015-16 school year, and will begin offering its first operational exams during the 2016-17 school year.

The Task Force has heard many parent and teacher concerns about the previous vendor-created assessments, and the Task Force recommendations below are targeted to ensure that any assessments created through the new contract are of the highest quality and best serve the needs of all of our students.

Mary Sorrels served on the SED item review committee for annual assessments during its contract with Pearson.<sup>73</sup> In her experience throughout the process, teachers were able to submit feedback in the review of the exams, but not in the original question creation. Other stakeholders have questioned the quality of the exams, compared to more trusted teacher-created exams such as the older Regents’ exams. Teachers have also expressed concern with respect to the manner in which student cut scores are set for students’ final scores and asked for more transparency in this process.

Teachers have shared at the regional listening sessions that they have seen students write “I don’t know what you are asking” in the exam section. Parents have expressed concern that students have been used as guinea pigs in the development and administration of standardized assessments. Students have stated that there was more than one right answer to questions, or questions seemed deliberately misleading. Some have suggested allowing students the opportunity to give feedback on the exam questions.

<sup>69</sup> Teacher. Central New York Regional Listening Session. November 10, 2015.

<sup>70</sup> United States Department of Education. (2013). Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers. Budget Summary by Budget Module. Retrieved November 14, 2015, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/parcc-budget-summary-tables.pdf>. The Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) is a different consortia of states that created an assessment system using nearly \$176 million of federal funds in 2011. The SBAC exam is administered on the computer, and is designed to be computer adaptive (meaning the test content changes depending on how the student is performing). Eighteen states are part of the SBAC but New York has never been one of them.

<sup>71</sup> Contract Transaction. <http://www2.osc.state.ny.us/transparency/contracts/contracttransactions.cfm?Contract=SED01-C010713-3300200>

<sup>72</sup> New York State Education Department. (2015). 3-8 Assessment Contract awarded to Questar. Retrieved November 20, 2015, from <http://www.nysed.gov/news/2015/3-8-assessment-contract-awarded-questar-inc>.

<sup>73</sup> Sorrels, Mary. Educator and Literacy Workshop Presenter, Clarence School District. Assessment Work Group Conference Call. November 16, 2015.



One of the most common concerns the Task Force heard from parents and teachers is that students' test score reports fail to provide useful information that parents or teachers can use to inform instruction. One parent in the Central New York listening session stated how "knowing that her student received a 1, 2, 3, or 4 does not tell her how she can help [her student]." A teacher from Hudson City Schools said that at best, they get data that says that 47 percent of students in the fourth grade got the question wrong, but they never know which students struggled with the specific skill tested.<sup>74</sup> Other teachers have asked the State to model score reports after old New York reports or score reports from other States that provide more information to teachers and parents. Christy Bezrutczyk, a North Country region parent, shared with the Task Force that, "test results need to be interpreted with the student's parents by the child's teacher."<sup>75</sup> In addition, parents and teachers have demanded that test scores be returned before the end of the school year so they can use them to impact instruction for students that school year, rather than the following fall, as is current practice.

SED released over 50 percent of test questions on this year's 3-8 grade ELA and Mathematics assessments. However, parents and teachers have asked the Task Force to require more transparency around test questions and answers after test administration. These stakeholders also feel that many test questions are inappropriate, but lack the full context of the entire test to accurately make this determination. Parents at the Southern Tier regional listening session objected to the idea of their students being used to field test questions for a private corporation. Jessica McNair, a teacher at New Hartford schools, shared with the Task Force the need for the test process to become more transparent. She called for tests to be made public immediately after administration, and for test scores to be returned to teachers and students in a timely manner to serve as teaching tools to improve learning.



According to SED,<sup>77</sup> a typical student in grades 3-4 who takes the ELA and Mathematics exams will spend 50 minutes per subject per day for three consecutive days for a total of 300 minutes each spring. However, a student in these grades is permitted to spend up to 60 minutes per session. A typical student in grades 5-8 will spend 50-60 minutes per subject per day for three consecutive days for a total of 300-360 minutes each spring. However, a student in these grades is permitted to spend up to 90 minutes per session.<sup>78</sup>

The United States Department of Education recently released a testing action plan<sup>79</sup> that required that tests be high quality and worth taking. The Task Force agrees with this sentiment and believes that New York should lead the nation in this arena.

<sup>74</sup> Teacher. Capital District Region. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 4, 2015.

<sup>75</sup> Bezrutczyk, Christy. Parent, North Country. Assessment Work Group Conference Call with Task Force Members and Task Force Staff. November 16, 2015.

<sup>76</sup> McNair, Jessica. Teacher, New Hartford School District. Assessment Work Group Conference Call with Task Force Members and Task Force Staff. November 16, 2015.

<sup>77</sup> New York State Education Department. (2015). Common Core English Language Arts and Mathematics Tests: School Administrator's Manual. Retrieved November 19, 2015, from <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/sam/ei/eisam15rev.pdf>.

<sup>78</sup> A recent study from authors at the Benjamin Center for Public Policy Initiatives SUNY New Paltz on time spent on testing asserts that students spend up to 19 hours on the 3-8 ELA and Mathematics assessments. The Task Force has reviewed this report and does not agree with its methodology. The report estimates the total time spent on testing to include not only the student time spent on the test but teachers' time spent setting up the classroom for the test, among other non-test related items. When the Task Force makes recommendations with regard to testing time, it is specifically referring to the testing time under the State one percent cap. <http://www.newpaltz.edu/media/the-benjamin-center/Time%20on%20Test%20-%20The%20Fixed%20Costs%20of%203-8%20Standardized%20Testing%20in%20New%20York%20State.pdf>.

<sup>79</sup> United States Department of Education. (2015). Fact Sheet: Testing Action Plan. Retrieved November 27, 2015, from <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-testing-action-plan>.



Many parents and teachers are concerned about the length of the 3-8 ELA and Mathematics tests. In the regional listening sessions, as well as in the website comments, parents repeatedly raised concern over the third grade test being longer than the Regents exams which are used to determine whether or not a student can graduate. Parents and teachers are also concerned that the tests take place over three consecutive school days. A New York City public school administrator said that, “even a reduction to two days would make a world of difference for kids.”<sup>80</sup>

Teachers have noted that it seems as if the 3-8 ELA and Mathematics test questions test some standards more than others. An essay from a concerned parent published in Newsday asks the State to reduce the weight of the anchor standard, which asks students to reference the text.<sup>81</sup> Dr. Catherine Snow of Harvard, who served on the Common Core State Standards Validation Committee has stated that each of the Standards are equally important and should be assessed equally.<sup>82</sup> If the Standards are, in fact, equally weighted on assessments, this is not currently clear in the eyes of parents.

Over 150 website and in-person comments from parents relate to issues regarding assessments for Students with Disabilities. There is widespread support from legislators, parents and educators for a waiver from the federal government that would permit New York to test students at a level aligned with their instructional level, not their grade level. A special educator in the Southern Tier said the most helpful thing the State could do for students with disabilities is to allow students to access all approved accommodations in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP), including the option to have the test read aloud.<sup>83</sup> Ashli Dreher, a special educator for students with severe disabilities, has expressed concern that even the New York State Alternate Assessment is too challenging for some students now that this test is aligned to the Common Core.<sup>84</sup> However, other parent advocates and disability groups have expressed the need to hold high expectations for all students, including those with disabilities and want such students to take grade-level tests without exception.<sup>85</sup>



Stakeholders have also expressed support of the State’s federal waiver application to exempt English Language Learners who have recently arrived in the country from testing for two years. A teacher in Utica who teaches Students with Interrupted Formal Education<sup>86</sup> has said that the grade level exam for newly arrived refugees is torturous for her students because they are so far behind grade level when they get to her classroom.<sup>87</sup>

Although much of the work of the Task Force has focused on the testing burden associated with State-administered assessments, the Task Force also believes that the quantity of local assessments must be reduced. New York State was recently highlighted by the United States Department of Education as being a leader and model for other States<sup>88</sup> in reducing the

amount of time spent on testing, including the administration of local assessments. New York must continue to lead to reduce additional local testing, and involve parents in local decision-making on this issue.

<sup>80</sup> Teacher. New York City Region. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 5, 2015.

<sup>81</sup> Tampio, Nicolas. (2015). The Journal News. View: Fix Common Core. October 21, 2015. Retrieved December 5, 2015 from <http://www.lohud.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/10/20/view-fix-common-core/74231974/>.

<sup>82</sup> Snow, Catherine. Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 20, 2015.

<sup>83</sup> Teacher. Southern Tier Region. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 11, 2015.

<sup>84</sup> Dreher, Ashli. New York State Teacher of the Year, Lewiston-Porter Central School District. Assessment Work Group Conference Call with Task Force Members and Task Force Staff. November 16, 2015.

<sup>85</sup> Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 17, 2015.

<sup>86</sup> Students with Interrupted Formal Education are students from homes where English is not spoken, and who have entered United States schools after the second grade, and have missed at least two years of formal schooling.

<sup>87</sup> Teacher. Mohawk Valley Region. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 4, 2015.

<sup>88</sup> United States Department of Education. (2015). Fact Sheet: Testing Action Plan. Retrieved November 27, 2015, from <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-testing-action-plan>.

A study from the Center for American Progress found that early elementary students take three times as many district-required tests as state-required exams.<sup>89</sup> In 2014, the State Education Department issued one-time Teaching Transparency Reports to districts that provided guidance for how districts can reduce unnecessary local assessments.<sup>90</sup>

One parent submitted feedback through the website stating that their school had been warned by SED that they had exceeded the State cap on testing time, but the school continued to test.<sup>91</sup> Parents have also suggested that schools release their testing calendars to avoid the element of surprise and expressed displeasure that teachers and administrators do not meaningfully review student test scores with students or parents.

The Task Force also heard from parents who want to ensure that a district's decision to deliver supplemental Academic Intervention Services (AIS) to a student is never based solely on the student's standardized test scores. The Task Force received multiple comments through the website describing stories of parents who were concerned when their A+ students were placed into AIS Mathematics after receiving a 2 on the State exams, a decision that took time away from other elective courses such as art. One parent related that her daughter was placed in AIS Mathematics and Honors Mathematics during the same school year.

**Recommendation 10: Involve educators, parents, and other education stakeholders in the creation and periodic review of all State standards-aligned exams and other State assessments.**

Our teachers have the greatest responsibility for students' instruction and accordingly must be heavily involved in the creation of test questions, not private corporations. The State must borrow best practices learned from the development of its teacher-created Regents exams. This role should include input into creating, editing and ultimately approving questions. Before being administered to students, assessment questions should be reviewed by content area experts, as well as experts in educating Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners to make sure that assessments are accessible and appropriate for all learners. The State should also include teacher input on the back end – if teachers believe that test questions were unfair or inappropriate, SED should take this feedback into account.



The State should weave together teacher and administrator as well as content area professional organization participation with consultation by psychometricians in the conception, design, and review of standardized tests. This process will enhance item design and analysis and better determine levels of proficiency.

<sup>89</sup> Lazarin, Melissa. (2014). Center for American Progress. Testing Overload in America's Schools. Retrieved November 24, 2015, from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2014/10/16/99073/testing-overload-in-americas-schools/>.

<sup>90</sup> New York State Education Department. (2015). Teach More, Test Less. Retrieved November 14, 2015, from <http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/test/teachers-leaders/teach-more-test-less/home.html>. Local school districts and NYSED posted these reports on their respective websites.

<sup>91</sup> Long Island Parent. Written Testimony from Common Core Task Force Website. October 13, 2015.

At the same time, local districts should emphasize and increase routine feedback to teachers and administrators about individual student progress through less reliance on standardized tests. Formative assessments have the benefit of providing immediate and useful information that educators can use to modify instruction in the near-term rather than wait months for test results that come too late to help the student. SED should provide clear guidance to teachers and districts on the development of rigorous, high-quality formative assessments.

As part of this review, the State should work with higher education faculty and administrators to identify and adopt a nationally recognized standards-aligned assessment (e.g. reimagined Regents exams or other alternative) that, when combined with other factors, accurately predicts college readiness and identifies areas of academic weakness for students in the tenth and eleventh grade.

Currently, students who meet the requirements for high school graduation on the ELA and Algebra I Regents Exams are all too often placed in remedial classes upon enrollment in two- or four-year colleges. It is unreasonable for students to graduate from high school believing they are ready for college, and then require them to take remedial courses before they can start college-level work. In addition to the loss of academic momentum, the financial cost to these students is huge. These students spend approximately \$93 million in tuition, including \$39 million in student loans on remedial courses that re-teach them what they should have mastered in high school.<sup>92</sup>

Demonstrating proficiency on such an exam should indicate readiness for college-level work and a student who scores above a given threshold should not be required to take remedial coursework at a public college in New York. Further, if a student's score falls below the readiness threshold, high schools will then have the opportunity to offer targeted interventions to improve readiness before graduation.

Combined with appropriate academic supports for students while they are still in high school, the adoption of an alternative assessment that is both predictive of college success and diagnostic of student needs would increase the number of students successfully transitioning to college, accelerate degree completion, and lower costs for students.

The State should also work with higher education faculty and administrators to align high school and first-year college expectations to ensure that our high school graduates can seamlessly transition to post-secondary education without the time and expense of remediation.

**Recommendation 11: Gather student feedback on the quality of the new tests.**

Students are most affected by quality issues in State tests. State assessments should include a detachable, de-identified feedback form where students can leave feedback on precise test questions that they thought were confusing or of poor quality. The feedback forms would only be used in the evaluation of specific test questions, and not for any other purpose.

**Recommendation 12: Provide ongoing transparency to parents, educators, and local districts on the quality and content of all tests, including but not limited to publishing the test questions.**

**Parent Engagement and Testing Transparency:** Districts must engage parents as partners and participants in decisions about local testing. Districts should hold parental engagement workshops that review all assessments being used in a given classroom at the beginning and end of the school year, as well as provide time for teachers to review student performance with parents throughout and before the end of the school year.

The State should also issue annual Testing Transparency Reports for each school district to provide parents with timely and accurate information about district assessment practices, including what tests students take and the time spent on testing. These reports should be distributed to local school districts and school boards.

**Student Score Report Content and Quality:**

Assessments are intended to be used as a tool to improve student learning. Accordingly, student score reports delivered to the parents and teachers must be detailed and timely enough to improve instruction. Current score reports only list a student's score and their proficiency level. The State should solicit parent input in the redesign of score reports as well as examine respected national models to increase transparency and to ensure that the information provided is useful and constructive to students and parents. A score report should tell a student, parent and teacher exactly which questions the student answered correctly, as well as scores on different sub-sections on the test. The reports sent to parents should be designed to inform the reader which skills a student has demonstrated mastery on and which require further practice and attention.



**Standard Weighting Transparency:** The State Education Department has indicated that not all standards are weighted equally on the 3-8 ELA and Mathematics assessments (e.g. Standard 1.4 may have six questions on the assessment and Standard 1.5 has zero). However, Dr. Catherine Snow of Harvard, who served on the Common Core State Standards Validation Committee said there was no mention that one standard would have more weight than another during the validation process.<sup>93</sup> If there is a reason to weight one standard more than others, the Education Department must explicitly publish the relative importance of each standard in each grade and subject, its approximate weight on state exams and rationale for each in a manner that is clear to teachers, parents, and students.

**Release of Test Questions and Results:** Test results should be returned to parents and teachers before the end of the school year. Currently, parents and teachers do not receive student score reports for April standardized assessments until September of the next school year. This is far too late for teachers to correct misunderstandings or adapt instruction for students' needs.

New York currently releases approximately 50 percent of exam questions from the 3-8 ELA and Mathematics exams fewer than those released for the Regents exams. In order for students to improve, it is not enough to know you got several questions wrong, without being able to see what those questions were. The State must work with its vendor to release all questions that are not for use on future exams.

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<sup>93</sup> Snow, Dr. Catherine. Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 20, 2015.



### **Recommendation 13: Reduce the number of days and shorten the duration for standards-aligned State standardized tests.**

The purpose of standardized testing is to measure how well all students are learning, how subgroups of students are learning, and how successful schools and districts are in helping every learner to meet and exceed high academic standards. However, many teachers have suggested that the annual 3-8 ELA and Mathematics exams are too long, especially for younger students.<sup>94</sup> In fact, in New York, some elementary-level students take between 360 and 540 minutes of tests<sup>95</sup> whereas the SAT is only 225 minutes.<sup>96</sup>

Other states have reduced the number of test days in recent years. North Carolina tests both ELA and Mathematics for one day each and students have three hours to complete the exam, although students who are meaningfully engaged with the test may take an additional hour.<sup>97</sup> New Mexico reduced the number of test items on its state-mandated standardized assessment to reduce test duration by 15 percent<sup>98</sup> and Texas recently enacted legislation to mandate that all state tests must be completed in one day and also enacted a limit on the number of minutes such tests should take to complete.<sup>99</sup>

New York should follow the pattern set by these states and shorten both the number of days and duration of testing sessions for all students in grades 3-8. The State should also formally study whether to further reduce the number of test days and duration of testing sessions for students in grades 3-5. This reduction of testing will return instructional time to our teachers and students and alleviate student stress and anxiety.

### **Recommendation 14: Provide teachers with the flexibility and support to use authentic formative assessments to measure student learning.**



There is a wide array of available tools and purposes for student assessment. Teachers need the flexibility to use different types of assessments that best inform their instruction and measure student learning, not just high-stakes summative assessments administered near the end of the school year.

The State and local school districts must support the use of standards-based formative assessments and authentic assessments woven into the routine curriculum along with periodic diagnostic and benchmark testing. The goal of these assessments is to monitor student learning to provide ongoing

feedback throughout the school year that teachers can use to improve instruction and students can use to improve learning.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>94</sup> From the Common Core Task Force website, nearly 200 submissions mentioned concern over the length of 3-8 ELA and Mathematics exams.

<sup>95</sup> New York State Education Department. (2015). Fact Sheet: Common Core and Assessments. Retrieved November 16, 2015, from <http://usny.nysed.gov/docs/common-core-assessment-faq.pdf>. A fifth grader typically spends 60 minutes per session over three days of testing for a total of 360 minutes but may take up to 90 minutes per session for a total of 540 minutes.

<sup>96</sup> The College Board. (2015). SAT Test Day Tips. Retrieved November 21, 2015, from <https://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-test-day-tips>. Students in grades 5-8 are permitted up to 90 minutes per session for the Common Core-aligned Mathematics and ELA exams that are administered over three consecutive days.

<sup>97</sup> North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2013). End-of-Grade Assessments. Retrieved November 16, 2015, from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/testing/eog/eogadmininfo13.pdf>.

<sup>98</sup> New Mexico Public Education Department. (2015). Testing in New Mexico. Retrieved November 29, 2015, from [http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/NMTeachDocs/Toolbox/Testing%20in%20New%20Mexico%20Eblast%20\(March%207%202014\).pdf](http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/NMTeachDocs/Toolbox/Testing%20in%20New%20Mexico%20Eblast%20(March%207%202014).pdf).

<sup>99</sup> Texas House Bill 743. <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/tlodocs/84R/billtext/html/HB00743l.htm>; <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=84R&Bill=HB743>.

<sup>100</sup> Carnegie Mellon University Eberly Center. (2015). What Is the Difference Between Formative and Summative Assessment? Retrieved November 29, 2015, from <http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/basics/formative-summative.html>.

*“Assessments should include limited state-level assessments that support deeper learning and more robust locally-developed performance assessments that allow students to inquire, investigate, collaborate, present, think critically, be creative, and defend their ideas.”<sup>101</sup>*

*–Noguera, Darling-Hammond & Friedlaender (2015)*

To encourage the design and use of more formative assessments, the State must assist with the creation and approval of such assessments and districts must provide educators with the time, resources and professional development opportunities to create and administer these types of assessments.

**Recommendation 15: Undertake a formal review to determine whether to transition to untimed tests for existing and new State standardized tests aligned to the standards.**

Anecdotes from teachers and parents have suggested that the time limit on the exams causes student anxiety. A third grade teacher from Brooklyn has suggested that the time limits have undermined the teaching of the Common Core -- as the Common Core teaches students to engage deeply with a text, but the students are tested on quick test reading.<sup>102</sup> The State must commence a formal review whether a transition to untimed examination periods for all students or specific types of learners would benefit students and reduce anxiety.

**Recommendation 16: Provide flexibility for assessments of Students with Disabilities.**

Teachers, especially special educators, have talked about students in the so-called “gray area” – that is, students whose disabilities do not qualify them for the New York State Alternative Assessment, but who struggle to perform on grade-level 3-8 ELA and Mathematics exams.

The State has sought a waiver<sup>103</sup> from the federal government to assess a group of Students with Disabilities at their instructional age rather than their chronological age (e.g. If a severely disabled eighth grade student is reading at the fourth grade level, he or she would take the fourth grade test). The Task Force urges the State to redouble its efforts to advocate for this waiver, and also urges the federal government to grant this waiver so the State can act to protect vulnerable students from over-testing. Further, should the State receive this waiver, the Task Force recommends that in order to keep expectations and standards high for Students with Disabilities, schools should consider parental input on testing during the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process.

<sup>101</sup> Noguera, Pedro, Darling-Hammond, Linda & Friedlaender, Diane. (2015). Jobs for the Future. Equal Opportunity for Deeper Learning, 19. Retrieved November 24, 2015, from <http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/materials/Equal-Opportunity-for-Deeper-Learning-100115a.pdf>.

<sup>102</sup> Teacher. New York City Region. Phone Conversation with Task Force Staff. November 12, 2015.

<sup>103</sup> For the grades 3-8 State assessments currently in use, and until such time as NYSED transitions to adaptive testing, NYSED is requesting approval to more appropriately assess, for instructional, growth and State accountability purposes, the performance of a small subgroup of students whose cognitive and intellectual disabilities preclude their meaningful participation in chronological grade level instruction. These are students who have significant intellectual delays and substantial difficulties in cognitive areas such as memory, language comprehension, reasoning and problem-solving, but who do not meet the State’s definition of a student with a severe disability (most significant cognitive disability) appropriate for the State’s alternate assessment. New York State Education Department. ESEA Flexibility Waiver Amendment Requests Submitted to the United States Department of Education 8/07/14.<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/documents/Amendmentrequests080714.pdf>.

### **Recommendation 17: Protect and enforce testing accommodations for Students with Disabilities.**

Students with Disabilities have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that provide for testing and other educational accommodations. Students have a right under federal law to use approved classroom accommodations such as extra time or ability to hear instructions orally rather than read them when taking state assessments.<sup>104</sup> However, the Task Force heard from parents and special education teachers that IEP accommodations have not always been honored during the administration of 3-8 ELA and Mathematics exams.<sup>105</sup> To stop this practice, the State should issue formal guidance to districts to ensure that students receive their IEP-provided accommodations. The State must do all that it can to monitor and protect students and parents' rights and ensure that the students have access to all approved accommodations during State exams.

### **Recommendation 18: Explore alternative options to assess the most severely disabled students.**



The New York State Alternative Assessment is now aligned to the Common Core and is benchmarked to Kindergarten and higher grade standards. This approach leaves severely disabled students with instructional ages lower than kindergarten and their parents and educators in a difficult position. For instance, Ashli Dreher told the Task Force that a student taking the New York State Alternate Assessment may be asked to add numbers together when the student is unable to count.<sup>106</sup>

Special education educators and parents have expressed to the Task Force that it is unreasonable to expect a child with an instructional age of pre-kindergarten or below to take an exam aligned to kindergarten standards and above. To address this issue, the State Education Department should

immediately convene an advisory panel of special education educators and parents to identify alternative assessment protocols for these students.

### **Recommendation 19: Prevent students from being mandated into Academic Intervention Services based on a single test.**

The Task Force heard from parents who stated that due to a low score on a State assessment, honors students have been placed in remedial services. Students must receive the services they need but be protected from high-stakes decisions based on one test.

Educators and parents need more choices. Instead of automatically placing a student in Academic Intervention Services due to a single test score, a district should coordinate with parents and teachers to make a decision whether to provide additional services to a student. Standardized test scores provide useful information but should never constitute the sole factor in a determination to provide Academic Intervention Services. Instead, the foundation for such a decision should be based on diagnostic testing, authentic classroom and district assessments, and other formative assessments that measure and monitor individual student learning and progress along with parental input.

<sup>104</sup> United States Department of Education. (2006). Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Retrieved November 23, 2015, from <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home>.

<sup>105</sup> This comment was reiterated in Task Force staff phone conversations and Common Core Task Force website feedback.

<sup>106</sup> Testimony from Ashli Dreher, Western NY Listening Session. November 18, 2015.

In addition, the Task Force recommends that districts embed Academic Intervention Services in the typical school day as much as possible to reduce the need for isolated intervention sessions, preserving as much time as possible for art, music, technology, and physical education.

### **Recommendation 20: Eliminate double testing for English Language Learners.**

Currently, under federal law, a student who has newly arrived in the United States and does not speak English at home does not have to take the 3-8 English Language Arts test for one year. The State has sought a waiver from the federal government to extend this exemption to two years, during which time the student would take the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), a test of English Language Proficiency instead of the ELA exam.

Under federal law, all English Language Learners must take the NYSESLAT every year until a student demonstrates English proficiency on that exam. To add the ELA exam to the plate of a newly arrived English Language Learner adds unnecessary double testing and stress for these learners.

The State must continue to urge approval of its waiver and the federal government must take action to ensure that New York can adopt a testing regimen that keeps standards high and holds districts accountable yet does not double-test these learners at a time when they are trying to gain English language proficiency.

### **Issue Four: Ensure a Successful Transition to a New System**

The implementation of the Common Core in New York was rushed and flawed. Teachers stepped into their classrooms in the 2012-2013 school year unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the new standards, without curriculum resources to teach students, and forced to administer new high-stakes standardized tests that were designed by a corporation instead of educators.

Serving nearly 700 school districts and 5,000 schools and more than 200,000 teachers and 2.65 million students, the State has a great deal of work to do to successfully implement the recommendations of the Task Force. First, it must pursue an open and transparent process to comprehensively review New York's more than 1,500 individual standards with significant educator input and involvement. Next, it must openly and transparently modify, eliminate or create such standards to comprise new rigorous New York standards tailored to the needs of our learners.

After the adoption of new standards, the State must then create and release sample curriculum resources for adaptation by districts and teachers, and with adequate time to train administrators and teachers on the new standards. Next, the State must provide time and resources for educators to unpack and understand the new standards, design and select local curriculum and adapt instruction. Local school districts must also maintain an ongoing dialogue with parents about the standards to provide transparency and reduce confusion related to the standards, curriculum, and assessments.





Finally, the State must work with educators to create assessments aligned to the new standards and overhaul the testing system to reduce the number of test days and increase the amount of transparency provided to parents, students, and teachers.

**Recommendation 21: Until the new system is fully phased in, the results from assessments aligned to the current Common Core Standards, as well as the updated standards, shall only be advisory and not be used to evaluate the performance of individual teachers or students.**

Given the amount of work needed to get the new system right, the Task Force recommends that until the transition to a new system is complete, i.e. New York State-specific standards are fully developed along with corresponding curriculum and tests, State-administered standardized ELA and Mathematics assessments for grades three through eight aligned to the Common Core or updated standards shall not have consequences for individual students or teachers. Further, any growth model based on these Common Core tests or other state assessments shall not have consequences and shall only be used on an advisory basis for teachers. The transition phase shall last until the start of the 2019-2020 school year.

**APPENDIX A**  
Biographies of Task Force Members

## Task Force Members



**Richard D. Parsons,**

*Senior Advisor, Providence Equity Partners, Inc. (Chair of the Task Force)*

Richard Parsons is a Senior Advisor at Providence Equity Partners, Inc., a leading private equity investment firm specializing in media, communications and information companies. He is the former Chairman of the Board of Citigroup, Inc., and was the Chairman of the Board and CEO of Time Warner, Inc. In its January 2005 edition on America's Best CEOs, Institutional Investor magazine named Mr. Parsons the top CEO in the entertainment industry. From May through September, 2014, Mr. Parsons served as the Interim CEO of the Los Angeles Clippers.

Before joining Time Warner, in 1995, Mr. Parsons was Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Dime Bancorp, Inc., one of the largest thrift institutions in the United States. Previously, he was the managing partner of the New York law firm Patterson, Belknap, Webb and Tyler. Prior to that, he held various positions in state and federal government, as counsel for Nelson Rockefeller and as a senior White House aide under President Gerald Ford. Mr. Parsons received his undergraduate education at the University of Hawaii and his legal training at Union University's Albany Law School.

In 2008, Mr. Parsons served as a member of then President-Elect Barack Obama's Economic Transition Team. More recently, he served as a member of the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness and also served as the Chairman of Governor Andrew Cuomo's New NY Education Reform Commission. His other civic and non-profit commitments include Chairman Emeritus of the Partnership for New York City; Chairman of the Apollo Theater Foundation; and of the Jazz Foundation of America. In October, Mr. Parsons was named Chairman of the Rockefeller Foundation, succeeding David Rockefeller Jr. He also serves on the boards of Teach for America, the Commission on Presidential Debates, Estée Lauder Companies Inc., Lazard Frères and Company, and Madison Square Garden, Inc.



**Heather Buskirk**

*Mohawk Valley Master Teacher; Science Teacher, Johnstown High School*

Heather Buskirk has been teaching for 10 years. She teaches physics and math at Johnstown High School, and is an integral part of designing and teaching at the Learning Project, a STEM academy for Johnstown students.

The Learning Project is a fully integrated project based learning program for seniors for which they receive credit for math, physics, participation in government, economics and English through real-world project experiences.

In addition to her school responsibilities, Ms. Buskirk is an instructional coach in the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery P-TECH program where she works with students and provides support for teachers using project based learning to design and deliver curriculum.

Within the NYS Master Teacher Program, Ms. Buskirk is a member of the Project-Based Learning Professional Learning Team and facilitated a workshop for her peers entitled "Project Based Learning 101."

She is also a member of the NYS Master Teacher Program Delegation to the TeachNY Advisory Council, through which the State University of New York has convened state and national experts to ensure that there are clear policies in place that both enable and help sustain exemplary teacher and leader preparation practice and address persistent challenges throughout the education pipeline for students.

Heather Buskirk earned her BA in astronomy and physics and Master of Arts in Teaching from the University of Virginia. She became a Knowles Science Teaching Fellow in 2004, and continues as a Senior Fellow. After earning her National Board Certification in 2010, Ms. Buskirk became a candidate support provider and served on the committee to revise the National Board's Standards for Accomplished Science Teaching.



**Geoffrey Canada**

*President, Harlem Children's Zone*

Having worked with the Harlem Children's Zone® for more than 30 years, Geoffrey Canada is renowned around the world for his pioneering work helping children and families in Harlem, and as a thought leader and passionate advocate for education reform.

From 1990 to 2014, Mr. Canada served as the President and Chief Executive Officer for the Harlem Children's Zone, which The New York Times called "one of the most ambitious social-policy experiments of our time." In 2011, Mr. Canada was named to the TIME 100 list of most influential people in the world and, in March 2014, was named one of Fortune's 50 greatest leaders in the world. As of July 1, 2014, Mr. Canada stepped down as CEO, handing the reins to COO Anne Williams-Isom. He continues to serve as President of the HCZ and Promise Academy Boards.

Under Mr. Canada's visionary leadership, HCZ has become a national model and the subject of significant media attention. Mr. Canada and HCZ have been featured in the documentary *Waiting for "Superman,"* as well as on 60 Minutes, The Oprah Winfrey Show, Anderson Cooper 360°, Black in America 2, The Charlie Rose Show, This American Life, and in articles in The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, Forbes, and The Associated Press. In 2008, Houghton Mifflin published *Whatever It Takes*, by Paul Tough, a detailed look at the work of Mr. Canada and HCZ.

Mr. Canada grew up in the South Bronx in a poor, sometimes violent neighborhood. Despite his troubled surroundings, he achieved great academic success, receiving a bachelor's degree from Bowdoin College and a master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. After graduating, Mr. Canada began his life's work helping children who, like himself, grew up in poor, distressed neighborhoods.

Mr. Canada has written two books: *Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America* (1995; reissued as a graphic novel in 2010) and *Reaching Up for Manhood: Transforming the Lives of Boys in America* (1998). A strong voice in public debates on education, he also has written for a number of publications, including op-eds for The New York Times and Daily News; gave a TED Talk on our failing schools and the need for innovation that was broadcast on PBS; and has spoken to audiences around the world about what it takes to help children succeed, from evaluation to early childhood education and beyond.

Mr. Canada was selected to serve on the Governor's New NY Education Reform Commission in 2012 and on the Smart Schools Commission in 2014. In 2011, he was appointed to the New York State Governor's Council of Economic and Fiscal Advisors. In 2006, Mr. Canada was selected by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg to serve as co-chair of the Commission on Economic Opportunity, responsible for formulating a plan to significantly reduce poverty. He is also an advisor to and board member of several nonprofit organizations.



**Carol L. Conklin-Spillane,**

*Principal, Sleepy Hollow High*

Carol L. Conklin-Spillane has been recognized nationally for her achievements in developing school programs and practices that lead to high graduation rates. She is a Faculty member of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and has presented for NASSP on School Based Practices that Support Success for English Language Learners, for The College Board on Making the Case for Open Enrollment in Advanced Placement Classes, and for the US Department of Education on Achieving High Graduation Rates and Preventing Dropouts. Ms. Conklin-Spillane was the keynote speaker "True Confessions of a Turn Around Principal" for the South Carolina Department of Education's Summer Leadership Institute, was co-presenter of

Continuity for Change: A Case Study of a Successful High School Principal for AERA. She has provided policy briefings to Congressional staff and on Personalizing Learning as Essential to the Reform Agenda on behalf of NASSP and the Alliance for Education and was a featured presenter at the NASSP/CSSR National School Showcase.

Ms. Conklin-Spillane has been Principal of Sleepy Hollow High School in New York since 1994. SHHS serves a socio-economically and ethnically diverse community 20 miles north of New York City and in 2015 was identified as a School of Opportunity. She serves as a consultant to NYS school districts through Northern Westchester BOCES, specializing



in enhancing leadership at the middle and high school level, supporting English language learners, improving school climate, making the shift to block scheduling and providing opportunity through open enrollment Prior to her tenure in the Public Schools of the Tarrytowns, she was an assistant high school principal and junior high school principal, beginning her career as a special education teacher in 1979. Under her leadership, in 2008 Sleepy Hollow High School was identified as A Best Practices High School by The Magellan Foundation; one of three New York State high schools featured as model schools whose practices and outcomes align with research on high school reform and achievement and then in 2009 SHHS was featured on the US. Department of Education's Doing What Works website. In 2011, Ms. Conklin-Spillane received the Pace University Partnership Award in recognition of all she has done to enhance the professional development of current and future teachers, and in 2012 she was selected as Outstanding Regional Administrator of the Year by ESSAA. Sleepy Hollow High School was been named a Breakthrough High School for 2014 by NASSP/MetLife Foundation for high achievement despite challenges, personalizing learning to meet the needs of all students. In 2014 ASCD released a DVD "Common Core Insider HS Math" which tells the story of how Sleepy Hollow High School is transforming teaching and learning to meet new challenges and support student success for all. In 2014 Principal Leadership Magazine published Mrs. Conklin-Spillane's article, "Modeling the Mission" and featured Sleepy Hollow High School in its Breakthrough 2014 edition.

Ms. Conklin-Spillane holds a BA in Education from Marymount College, an MS in Special Education from Fordham University and a Professional Diploma in Administration and Supervision.



**MaryEllen Elia**

*Commissioner of the New York State Education Department*

On May 26, 2015, The New York State Board of Regents voted to appoint MaryEllen Elia as Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York (USNY). She began in her new position on July 6. USNY comprises more than 7,000 public and independent elementary and secondary schools; 270 public, independent and proprietary colleges and universities; 7,000 libraries; 900 museums; 25 public broadcasting facilities; 3,000 historical repositories; 436 proprietary schools; 52 professions encompassing more than 850,000 licensees plus 240,000 certified educators; and services for children and

adults with disabilities.

Prior to coming to New York State, Ms. Elia served as superintendent in Hillsborough County, Florida from 2005 to 2015, where she is credited with successfully raising standards and raising student achievement. During her 10-year tenure, Ms. Elia partnered with teachers to develop a comprehensive, multiple measure evaluation system for teachers called Empowering Effective Teachers. Hillsborough County public schools were recognized in Florida and nationally for developing the system, and both U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten have praised the system for the extensive supports it provides for teachers and its pay structure that incentivizes teachers to take on more challenging positions.

Ms. Elia is the 2015 Florida Superintendent of the Year and was one of four finalists for the 2015 National Superintendent of the Year award.

Ms. Elia was born, raised, and attended school in Western New York. After graduating high school from Stella Niagara in Lewiston, she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Daemen College in Buffalo, a Master of Education from the University at Buffalo, and a Master of Professional Studies from SUNY Buffalo.

In 1970, Ms. Elia became a social studies teacher in the Sweet Home Central School District. For the next 16 years, she taught a number of history, government, and economics courses to students in grades nine through 12. When her family moved to Florida in 1986, she became a reading teacher in the Hillsborough County school district. Between 1989 and 2005, Ms. Elia held various administrative positions in the district, including General Director of Secondary Education and Chief Facilities Officer.



**Constance Evelyn, Superintendent**

*Valley Stream School District*

Constance Evelyn assumed the role of Superintendent of the Valley Stream School District in July 2015. She came to Valley Stream from the Auburn Enlarged City School District, where she served as Superintendent of Schools since August 2012.

Ms. Evelyn was previously Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction in the Ithaca City School District. She has also served as Middle School Principal in both Oswego and Rome City Schools; as Assistant Principal at Rome Free Academy; and as a Learning Specialist and Special Education teacher in the Bedford Central School District.

Ms. Evelyn was selected to serve on the Smart Schools Commission in 2014.

She has a Bachelor's of Arts in Psychology from the College of Staten Island, a Master's of Science degree in Special Education PreK-12, and Supervision and Administrative degree from Long Island University. She is currently pursuing a Doctoral degree in Education Leadership at the Sage Colleges in Albany.



**Catalina R. Fortino**

*Vice President, NYSUT*

Catalina R. Fortino was the vice president for education and the director of the United Federation of Teachers' Teacher Center before her election as a NYSUT vice president in April 2014.

Ms. Fortino is a nationally recognized expert in professional development, curriculum, assessments and program development in the teaching profession and has distinguished herself among the educators who specialize in school reform for high-needs schools.

Before turning her focus to professional development and the Teacher Center, Ms. Fortino was an early childhood teacher, a teacher of bilingual early childhood special education and a bilingual educational evaluator.

She has been the chair of the NYSUT Bilingual Committee of Practitioners, the co-chair of the New York State Professional Standards and Practices Board for Teaching, a member of the New York State Committee of Title I Practitioners and a member of the American Federation of Teachers English Language Learners Task Force.

Ms. Fortino has a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education and a master's degree in special education and bilingual education from Queens College. She also studied curriculum development at Teachers College.



**Kishayna Hazlewood**

*3rd Grade Teacher at P.S. 156 in Brooklyn*

Kishayna Hazlewood is a proud public school teacher in her tenth year of teaching. She is also a mother of two sons who are products of the public school system. As a parent she served on her children's School Leadership team. Her oldest son is a recent college graduate and her youngest is in his last year of high school.

Ms. Hazlewood holds New York State teaching certifications in both childhood education and special education and is currently a candidate for National Board Certification.

She holds a Bachelor in Business Administration from Baruch College and a Masters in Elementary Education from Brooklyn College. Currently she is pursuing a second Masters in Educational Leadership.

Born and raised in Brownsville Brooklyn, Ms. Hazlewood is strongly committed to the children and families of the community. Her entire teaching career has been in the community, and for the last nine years she has taught third grade at PS 156, a Community Learning school in Brownsville. She serves on P.S. 156's Community Learning School advisory board and is co-chair of the vertical planning team. As a strong believer in equity of education and opportunity for all children, she is highly committed to the success of all of our students.



**Tim Kremer**

*Executive Director of the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA)*

Tim Kremer has been the executive director of the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) since 1998. Before joining the NYSSBA, Mr. Kremer was employed by the Ohio School Boards Association for nearly 20 years.

As NYSSBA's chief executive officer, Mr. Kremer leads the Association's staff of 56 professionals in fulfilling its mission of providing advocacy, information, leadership development programs and customized consulting services for the state's nearly 700 school boards. He is a frequent spokesman for NYSSBA to the membership, media, legislative bodies and other related organizations. He is a sought-after presenter at various professional workshops and seminars. Mr. Kremer's areas of expertise include association leadership, legislative advocacy, school board governance, executive recruitment and development, organizational change and public relations. Mr. Kremer has co-authored three handbooks: one on the school board presidency, a second on the school board/superintendent relationship and a third regarding school district management team operations. He also is a regular contributor to many professional publications, including NYSSBA's own award winning newspaper, On Board.

Mr. Kremer has a master's degree in public administration from Ohio State University, where he specialized in human resource administration and labor relations. He also earned a bachelor's degree from Kent State University, majoring in political science.

Mr. Kremer and his wife, Jaye, are the parents of three sons.



**Senator Carl Marcellino**

*Chair of the Senate Education Committee*

Senator Carl Louis Marcellino was elected to represent the Fifth Senate District on March 14, 1995. He is Chairman of one of the Senate's senior committees, the Senate Education Committee and Vice Chairman of the Transportation Committee. Senator Marcellino also serves as a member on the Senate Committees on Rules, Finance, Banks, Consumer Protection, Cultural Affairs and Tourism, Environmental Conservation, and Labor. From 1995 to 2008 he served in the capacity of the Chairman of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee.

Senator Marcellino is Chairman of the Oyster Bay Western Waterfront Committee, founding member of the State Advisory Board of the National Environmental Policy Institute, former President of the New York Conference of Italian American State Legislators and is currently Chairman of the Council of State Governments.

Senator Marcellino was born on December 23, 1942 in Brooklyn, New York and attended public schools in Queens. He earned both Bachelor of Arts and Master of Science degrees from New York University and a Professional Diploma in Administration and Supervision from St. John's University. After a 20 year career as a science teacher and administrator in the New York City School system, Senator Marcellino was elected as the Oyster Bay Town Clerk, a position he held until his Senate election.

Senator Marcellino and his wife, Patricia Marcellino, Ed.D, former Associate Dean of Academic Affairs in the Ruth S. Ammon School of Education at Adelphi University and Professor of Education Leadership, are long time Syosset residents and have two children, Jean and Carl.



**Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan**

*Chair of the Assembly Education Committee*

Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan represents the 37th Assembly District in Queens County, which includes the historic New York City neighborhoods of Sunnyside, Ridgewood, Long Island City, Queensbridge, Ravenswood, Astoria, Woodside, Maspeth, Dutch Kills and Blissville. She was first elected to the Assembly in 1984.

A resident of the district for most of her life, she is a graduate of St. Aloysius R.C. School and Grover Cleveland High School. Assemblywoman Nolan graduated from New York University cum laude with a B.A. degree in Political Science.

Assemblywoman Nolan was appointed Chair of the Assembly's Committee on Education in 2006. She has spearheaded efforts to achieve class size reduction, universal pre-k, middle school initiatives, improve high school graduation rates, student data privacy protections and other measures that will ultimately mean success for the more than three million school children in New York State. As a parent of a public school student, Assemblywoman Nolan brings a parent's perspective to the ongoing education dialogue.

Assemblywoman Nolan was also selected to serve on the New NY Education Reform Commission in 2012 and on the Common Core Implementation Panel in 2014. In addition, she serves on the Ways and Means Committee, the Veterans' Affairs Committee and the Corporations committees. Previously, Assemblywoman Nolan Chaired the Assembly's Committee on Banks and the Committee on Labor. For many years in the legislature Assemblywoman Nolan was the Assembly's representative to the MTA Capital Program Review Board, where she successfully signed the third MTA Capital Plan, driving millions of dollars to mass transit. Assemblywoman Nolan previously chaired the Real Property Taxation Committee, the NYS Assembly Commission on State-Federal Relations, and the Legislative Women's Caucus.

Assemblywoman Nolan is active in many civic associations in her district where she has been the recipient of numerous awards. She lives with her husband, Gerard Marsicano, and son Nicholas in Ridgewood.



**Samuel Radford III**

*President, District Parent Coordinating Council of Buffalo*

Samuel L. Radford, III, currently serves as President of the District Parent Coordinating Council of Buffalo, an organization responsible for representing parent interests within the Buffalo Public Schools District. As a matter of public policy, Mr. Radford's interests lay at the intersection of parent engagement, student academic achievement and district-level education policy. A native of Buffalo, Mr. Radford excelled in public schools and graduated from Buffalo's Hutchinson-Central Technical High School. Upon high school graduation, Mr. Radford served honorably in the United States Marine Corps. As a teacher, he has taught math at Buffalo's Stepping Stone Academy and has lectured on organizing and empowerment at The United States Air Force Academy, SUNY at Buffalo, Buffalo State College, SUNY Albany, Howard University, MoreHouse College, Spellman College, Miami Police Department, Buffalo Public Schools District, NYS Department of Labor and the MLK Center in Atlanta, among other institutions.

Mr. Radford has been involved in public school activism since 1990, when he became Chairperson of the Overall Policy Council for Head Start of Western New York. He later served as Student Government President at Erie County Community College and SUNY Statewide Student Association Vice-President. In Buffalo he acted as community organizer for C.R.U.C.I.A.L. Human Services as well as Group Home Coordinator for Berkshire Farms Center and Services for Youth. Currently he is Co-Chair for the Millions More Movement Buffalo Local Action Committee and recently participated in President Obama's White House Community Leadership Briefing and served on the White House Community Leadership Council for Education. He is Director of Buffalo's Masten Resource Center of the Community Action Organization of Erie County. He is the recipient of many community awards including: the 2009 Buffalo's Umoja Man of the Year Award, the 2009 Association of Black Social Workers Community Service Award, the 2010 Black Achievers Award, the 2011 Phi Beta Sigma Education Community Service Award, the 2013 Mayor's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award, and Buffalo News 2011 Citizen of the Year Award.

Mr. Radford has studied at Erie Community College and has a B.S. from SUNY Empire State College.





**Carrie Remis**

*Rochester Area Parent*

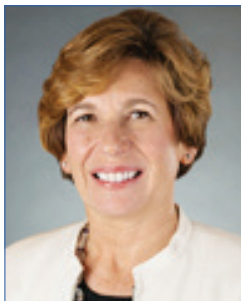
Carrie Remis began her career in education in 1994 as an advocate for New York State’s community college system, representing both the college presidents and boards of trustees in Albany. A native of Rochester, she returned home to serve on the administration of the University of Rochester’s Eastman School of Music and the Margaret Warner Graduate School of Education. She later joined the administration of the Nazareth Schools, an independent pre-K- 12 Catholic school system with a long tradition of excellence and diversity.

It was as a parent leader in the Rochester City School District that Ms. Remis became concerned about inequities within the public school system and the limited opportunities for meaningful community participation to address these systemic problems. In 2006 she co-founded the Rochester Fund for Educational Accountability, an all-volunteer organization providing technical assistance and training to communities invoking their rights under federal education law. In 2009 she founded the Parent Power Project, aimed at building the advocacy capacity of parent organizations across the state.

In 2012, Governor Cuomo appointed Ms. Remis as the sole parent representative to his New York Education Reform Commission. Ms. Remis has been a vocal proponent of greater transparency and parental involvement in education policy discussions. In 2013, Ms. Remis co-chaired Mayor Warren’s Early Learning Council which recommended city-wide measures to eliminate barriers to high quality early childhood education.

Ms. Remis is a former member of the Democrat and Chronicle’s Board of Contributors and frequent contributor of articles on education reform. She serves on the boards of the Opportunity in Education Coalition, the National School Choice Week Coalition, the Center for Educational Justice and the New York Campaign for Achievement Now. In addition, she is an active member of the League of Women Voters and an advisor to Girls4STEM, an organization of Monroe County high school girls working to close the gender gap in STEM education.

Ms. Remis holds a bachelor’s degree in History from the State University of New York at Albany. She and her husband Tom, an attorney, are natives of Rochester, NY. Their daughter is enrolled in a Greater Rochester area high school.



**Randi Weingarten**

*President, American Federation of Teachers (AFT), AFL-CIO*

Randi Weingarten is president of the 1.6 million-member American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, which represents teachers; paraprofessionals and school-related personnel; higher education faculty and staff; nurses and other healthcare professionals; local, state and federal government employees; and early childhood educators. Prior to her election as AFT president in 2008, Ms. Weingarten served for 12 years as president of the United Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 2, representing approximately 200,000 educators in the New York City public school system, as well as home child care providers and other workers in health, law and education.

Ms. Weingarten holds degrees from Cornell University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations and the Cardozo School of Law. She worked as a lawyer for the Wall Street firm of Stroock & Stroock & Lavan from 1983 to 1986. She is an active member of the Democratic National Committee and numerous professional, civic and philanthropic organizations. Born in 1957 and raised in Rockland County, NY, Ms. Weingarten now resides on Long Island and in Washington, D.C.

Ms. Weingarten’s column “What Matters Most” appears in the New York Times’ Sunday Review the third Sunday of each month. You can follow her on Twitter at @rweingarten or on Facebook.



**Nancy L. Zimpher**

*Chancellor, State University of New York (SUNY)*

In June 2009 Nancy L. Zimpher became the 12th Chancellor of the State University of New York. With nearly 463,000 students and 64 colleges and universities, SUNY is the nation’s largest comprehensive system of higher education.

Chancellor Zimpher is active in numerous state and national education organizations, and is a recognized leader in the areas of teacher preparation, urban education, and university-community engagement, including as a leader of Higher Ed for Higher Standards, which serves as a vehicle for mobilizing support of the Common Core Standards.

She currently serves as chair of the Board of Governors of the New York Academy of Sciences and the National Association of System Heads. From 2012-2013 she was chair of CEOs for Cities, and from 2005 to 2011 she led the national Coalition of Urban Serving Universities. As co-founder of StriveTogether, Dr. Zimpher has been instrumental in creating a national network of innovative systemic partnerships that holistically address challenges across the education pipeline.

Prior to coming to SUNY, Dr. Zimpher served as president of the University of Cincinnati, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and executive dean of the Professional Colleges and dean of the College of Education at The Ohio State University. She has authored or co-authored numerous books, monographs, and academic journal articles on teacher education, urban education, academic leadership, and school/university partnerships.

Chancellor Zimpher holds a bachelor’s degree in English Education and Speech, a master’s degree in English Literature, and a Ph.D. in Teacher Education and Higher Education Administration, all from The Ohio State University.



**Andreea Musteata**

*Junior at Tech Valley High School (Student Ambassador)*

Andreea Musteata is a resident of Guilderland and currently a junior at Tech Valley High School. In addition to her studies, Ms. Musteata spends her afternoons in the laboratory at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Ms. Musteata is also involved in raising awareness about her high school and promoting project based learning. She has been a member of Tech Valley High School’s (TVHS) Key Club since freshman year, and has also been involved in many TVHS events, such as the annual TVHS play. Throughout the year, Musteata leads business executives, community leaders,

prospective students, and other partners on tours of TVHS. She has also led and participated in many panels, talks, and forums regarding issues ranging from Tech Valley’s mission to the need for an emphasis on STEM and innovation in modern education.

Previously, Ms. Musteata attended Farnsworth Middle School where she was a member of the National Honor Society and recognized by the Guilderland Board of Education for her high grade point average during the 2012-13 school year. Ms. Musteata also received the President’s Award for Educational Excellence, which recognizes eighth grade students who have earned a cumulative grade point average of 10.5 on a 12 point scale for all of their middle school years.

Upon graduating from high school, Ms. Musteata plans to pursue a double major in biomedical engineering and physics. She would like to attend medical school to become a cardiac surgeon.

## APPENDIX B

# Case Study of P.S. 172 Beacon School of Excellence

Every staffer shares in the responsibility of educating every student. Each student has a notebook in which staff logs that student's progress in reading, writing and mathematics over the course of their time at P.S. 172. Any adult who works with a student can log assessment results or observations in the notebook to allow any other teacher or school leader to view the notebook and understand the child's progress.

*“If you want a child to reach something on a high shelf, you get the child a better stool—you don’t lower the shelf.”*

- Principal Spatola

**P.S. 172 Beacon School of Excellence** is a public school in the Sunset Park neighborhood of Brooklyn that serves nearly 600 students in grades Pre-K through five with a staff of 59.<sup>107</sup> According to data from the State Education Department, 88 percent of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch, and 30 percent of students are identified as a student with a disability.<sup>108</sup> The student body is nearly 80 percent Hispanic or Latino and 30 percent qualify as English Language Learners.<sup>109</sup> P.S. 172 is a National Blue Ribbon School<sup>110</sup> and has some of the highest student test scores in the State.

Assistant Principal Erika Gunderson presented before the Task Force in Buffalo and described P.S. 172’s successful implementation of the Common Core as it relates to students and staff. She attributed to their unique approach to professional development, curriculum development, and instruction.

To learn more about how P.S. 172 has successfully implemented the Common Core, the Task Force staff visited the school in early December and also interviewed more than 11 staffers, including teachers, instructional coaches, and Principal Jack Spatola.

***Elements of the P.S. 172 approach may serve as a model for other schools around the state:***

- Teachers are empowered by school leadership to adapt and create their own curriculum and assessments aligned to the higher standards.
- The school reallocates existing resources to employ four instructional coaches – two full-time Mathematics coaches and two English Language Arts coaches – who provide in-depth instructional support and feedback to building teachers.
- The professional environment is highly collaborative and relies on co-teaching.
- Every staffer shares in the responsibility of educating every child.
- Students are taught in small groups and pull-out intervention services are minimized.
- Before the start of each school year teams of grade-level teachers spend months to develop shared curriculum, lessons and assessments tailored to the needs of their students that are then revised throughout the school year as needed.
- Grade-level teachers spend 80 minutes per week outside of the school day doing grade-specific collaborative professional development with participation by school leaders.
- All grade level staff (teachers, instructional coaches and special educators, as well as speech pathologists and occupational therapists) participate in common planning time during the school day four to five times a week to design and revise curriculum.

<sup>107</sup> P.S. 172 has four instructional coaches, 3 part-time teachers and 52 full-time teachers (including speech, occupational therapists, and guidance staff).

<sup>108</sup> New York State Education Department. “Available Data for P.S. 172”. 2014-15 data. <http://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2015&instid=800000045161>.

<sup>109</sup> New York State Education Department. “Available Data for P.S. 172”. 2014-15 data. <http://data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2015&instid=800000045161>.

<sup>110</sup> United States Department of Education. “National Blue Ribbon Schools Program.” 2011. <http://nationalblueribbonschools.ed.gov/profiled-schools/2011-nbrs-profiles/beacon-school/>.



**APPENDIX C**  
Acknowledgements

*The Common Core Task Force thanks the following individuals  
for their expertise and feedback provided through phone conversations  
with members and Task Force staff:*

**Greg Ahlquist:** *Teacher, Webster Central School District*

**Marci Aronovitz:** *Parent, New York City*

**Dr. Betsy Bernabe\*:** *Teacher, Camden Central School District*

**Christy Bezruczyk\*:** *Parent, North Country*

**Kelley Biondi:** *Parent, Mid-Hudson Region*

**Allison Blake:** *Teacher, Hudson City School District*

**Adele Bovard\*:** *Deputy Superintendent, Rochester City School District*

**Jamaal Bowman\*:** *Principal, Cornerstone Academy for Social Action Middle School*

**Mary-Claire Breslin:** *Teacher, New Rochelle City School District*

**Jamy Brice-Hyde:** *Teacher, Horseheads Central School District*

**Karen Bronson:** *Director of Professional Development, School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS)*

**Sonja Brookins Santelises:** *Vice President of K-12 Policy and Practice, Education Trust*

**Deborah Brooks:** *Parent, Long Island*

**Susan Bryns:** *Teacher, Farmingdale Union Free School District*

**Stacey Caruso-Sharpe:** *Teacher, Amsterdam City School District*

**Chris Cerrone\*:** *Board of Education Member, Springville-Griffith Institute*

**Vincent Clark:** *Vice President of Communication and Development, Buffalo Urban League*

**Sherry Cleary:** *Executive Director, New York City Early Childhood Professional Development Institute*

**Lars Clemensen\*:** *Superintendent, Hampton Bays Public Schools*

**Elaine Conroy:** *Teacher, Onteora Central School District*

**Antoinette Coppa:** *Teacher, P.S. 172*

**Suzanne Coyle:** *Parent, Long Island*

**Dr. Bill Daggett:** *Founder of International Center for Leadership in Education*

**Debbie Dermady:** *Teacher, Thousand Islands School District*

**Jeanette Deutermann:** *Parent, Long Island*

**Dr. Dirk Hightower:** *Executive Director, Children's Institute*

**Dr. Joseph Dragone\*:** *Superintendent, Ballston Spa Central School District*

**Ashli Dreher\*:** *Special Education Teacher, Lewiston-Porter Central School District*

**Mark Dunn:** *Teacher, New Hartford Central School District*

**Lorraine Eady:** *Teacher, Mohawk Valley Region*

**Megan Earls:** *Literacy Coach, P.S. 172 Beacon School of Excellence*

**Dr. Esther Fusco:** *Professor, Hofstra University*

**Dr. Ofelia Garcia\*:** *Professor, Graduate Center of City University of New York*

**Erika Gunderson:** *Assistant Principal, P.S. 172 Beacon School of Excellence*

**Daria Hall:** *Interim Vice President for Government Affairs and Communications, Education Trust*

**Colleen Hassan:** *Teacher, Horseheads Central School District*

**Susan Henderson:** *Executive Director, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund*

**Leah Hirsch:** *Teacher, New York City*

**Robert Horan:** *Superintendent, Schodack School District*

**Amy Italiano:** *Teacher, Long Island*

**Marianna Jonavitz:** *Teacher, New Rochelle City School District*

**Judy Kelly:** *Teacher, Public Schools of the Tarrytowns*

**Jennifer Kelsey:** *Parent, Southern Tier*

**Lynda Kennedy:** *Parent, New York City*

**Marla Kilfoyle\*:** *Teacher, Long Island*

**Kenneth Levy:** *Retired Principal, Mid-Hudson Region*

**Sonia Lindell:** *Manager of Educational Policy and Research, NYS Business Council*

**Diane Livingston:** *Parent, Long Island*

**Ronit Lubell:** *Parent, Mid-Hudson Region*

**Zak Malamed:** *Executive Director, Student Voice*

**Lisa Mangino:** *Teacher, Pioneer Central School District*

**Maria May\*:** *Teacher, Mid-Hudson Region*

**Colleen McDonald:** *Teacher, Camden Central School District*

**Dr. Peggy McLeod:** *Deputy Vice President of Education and Workforce Development, National Council of La Raza.*

**Jessica McNair\*:** *Teacher, New Hartford Central School District*

**Dr. Edward Melnick:** *Superintendent, North Shore School District*

**Eric Mihelbergel:** *Parent, Western New York*

**Dr. James Milgram:** *Professor of Mathematics, Stanford University*

**Dr. Louisa Moats:** *Principal, Moats Associates Consulting, Inc.*

**Christine Nerone:** *Teacher, P.S. 172*

**Deborah Nikrad:** *Teacher, P.S. 172*

**Donna Noesi:** *Teacher, Long Island*

**Tiffany Otten:** *Parent, Capital District*

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\*These individuals provided additional input to Task Force Work Groups on standards, curriculum, assessments, and unique student populations.





