



November 25, 2013

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Dear Colleagues,

Collectively, we have encountered a barrage of ill-will directed at Superintendents; as the result of rushed reform implementation. As Superintendents we have done an exceptional job of managing the irrational behaviors and refocusing our communities on our children in the midst of such angst and uncertainty. I am proud to be among your ranks.

We recently held our first Commissioner's Advisory Council meeting with your elected representatives from around the state, as well as the leadership of THE COUNCIL. Overall, I believe we were effective bringing voice to the sentiments coming from the field. We stressed upon the Commissioner that we are doing our best to lead implementation of state reform initiatives and maintain focus on the end game; but also shared our sincere disappointment that the last few communiqués from the State Education Department have been perceived as deflecting the blame to the local decision makers. Enough is enough!

We focused on some key points of interest and reinforced that we are ready, willing and able to come to the table to problem-solve with the Commissioner and SED officials.

Our MESSAGE OF URGENCY: *No new layers of reform should come forward. We should stop all plans until we receive a clear and concise ROADMAP of all that is expected in the next 12-18 months. This should be a collaborative effort which outlines realistic implementation timelines that will allow us to RESET.....PROCESS.....SEQUENCE current/future work that will enhance future successful implementation.*

Problematic issues and potential solutions discussed included:

- SLO Alternatives (Previous suggested alternatives provided in APPR Committee white papers)
- Test questions must be released so we can analyze data and monitor and adjust instruction. This should continue through the transition years.
- Assessments in K-2 should be limited to diagnostic and/or progress monitoring.
- Curriculum guidelines (scope-sequence-topics–modules) should be available for 1 year prior to implementation to allow for appropriate staff development prior to expected instruction.

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

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- SED needs to respond to parent concerns about *inBloom* and student data privacy to take down the temperature. We suggested SED avoid including any non-academic data not required by law.
- RESOURCES: Advocacy from SED should be enhanced to give us the resources we need to get this work done.
- Clear direction for decisions on June assessments and scoring to avoid the debacle of 2013 with dramatic decreases in high-stakes tests needed for graduation.

What action that will come from this poignant discussion remains to be seen. Past discussions and efforts, through the leadership of Bill Johnson, Jack Bierwirth, Adele Bovard and Lorna Lewis as Co-Chairs of the Curriculum and Assessment Committees, have proved to be persuasive. Their work has resulted in:

- Successful advocacy for seeking the federal math waiver reducing the need for 7th/8th grade accelerated math students to take the 8th grade common core math exam.
- Successful advocacy to add a January Common Core ELA Regents option for districts who traditionally test 11th grade ELA in January.
- Successful advocacy for shortening the grade 3-8 assessments.
- Raised awareness of the June 2014 testing schedule and the use of calculators for overlapping math exams. The department is willing to problem solve with schools that do not have sufficient numbers of calculators for each student to use to successfully challenge each specific exam.
- Advocacy for a consistent Regents grading scale as we transition to Common Core Assessments. We have advocated to keep the 1 - 100 point scale rather than have to "lift" yet another change. This discussion continues as the Department seeks to find a way to have statistical accuracy as they assign points and cut scores.

In addition, the testimony we developed for the Senate Education Committee on the Regents Reform Agenda was well-received by Chairman John Flanagan and other leaders in education. The testimony is available here: [http://www.nyscoss.org/img/news/news\\_3nj8vrxoqa.pdf](http://www.nyscoss.org/img/news/news_3nj8vrxoqa.pdf)

May each of you continue to make adjustments as you address the needs of your communities and focus on enhancing the educational experiences of all children.

Respectfully,



Mary Beth Fiore  
Superintendent of Schools  
President, THE COUNCIL