

Virtual Lobby Day

March 3, 2015

Raise
Our Voice

to
Reclaim
Opportunity

New York State
PTA
everychild.onevoice.®

Funding Our Schools

Assessing Student and
Teacher Performance

ADVOCACY ALERT



March is PTA Advocacy Month

Issues Brief: Funding Our Schools

Issues Brief: Assessing Student and Teacher Performance

Governor Cuomo states that “a strong effective school system is the hallmark of a healthy democracy” and calls for reform. He also calls upon us to work together to build a *New New York*. In order to accomplish either, we must:

- **Level (up) the playing field to ensure equitable access to a sound, basic education based on Regents graduation standards for every child**
- **Build on a positive, solid base of who we are, our successes and what our schools are doing well**

Our campaign is two-fold: a letter/postcard writing initiative and a Virtual Lobby Day.

Please, write letters and/or postcards to your representatives in Albany. You can use the attached information in a letter or postcard format, or create your own using the issue brief/talking points included. Letters should be sent to all those listed on the reverse side, and your local area representatives. Have members sign several copies at your meetings, and send them all in one envelope. The postcard included should be duplicated on postcard sheets available at local office supply stores (remember to put on a stamp). Duplicate a batch and have members sign at your next meeting! Send out letters/postcards more than once. *The more Albany hears from us, the stronger our message becomes.*

Virtual Lobby Day is *Tuesday, March 3*. On that day we are asking all members to call, email and/or fax their legislators. Tell them you support full funding for public schools and want to see restoration of education support. Contact all legislators listed, as well as your local representatives. *We need thousands of voices to ensure our message is heard.*

Together we can send a powerful message to Albany to:

- **Honor past commitments to fairly and adequately fund our schools**
- **Re-examine the effectiveness of student and educator assessment practices in improving effectiveness of instruction**



In addition to contacting your local representatives, please also contact:

Governor Andrew Cuomo

Executive Chamber
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224
518-474-8390
www.governor.ny.gov/contact/GovernorContactForm.php

Senator Dean Skelos

Majority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 909
Albany, NY 12247
518-455-3171
skelos@nysenate.gov

Assemblyman Carl E. Heastie

Speaker
Legislative Office Building, Room 522
Albany, NY 12248
518-455-4800
speaker@assembly.state.ny.us

Senator John J. Flanagan

Chair of the Senate Education Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 805
Albany, NY 12247
518-455-2071
flanagan@nysenate.gov

Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan

Chair of the Assembly Education Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 836
Albany, NY 12248
518-455-4851
nolanc@assembly.state.ny.us

NYS Assembly website: www.assembly.state.ny.us

NYS Senate website: www.nysenate.gov

2015 Issues Brief: Assessing Student and Teacher Performance

In this year's Executive budget, Governor Cuomo has demanded that the legislature adopt a "reform agenda" prior to even releasing specifics of a 2015 state aid proposal. While NYS PTA, the Educational Conference Board (ECB) and others have vehemently objected to this strategy, the Governor has made his program reform agenda part of the budget agenda that must be considered. A key aspect of that agenda addresses student testing, the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) and the manner in which student test results are linked to that performance review.

Background: The current teacher and principal performance review model (APPR) was adopted in 2012 and has been used to rate educator performance as Highly Effective, Effective, Developing or Ineffective in each of the past two years. In arriving at a performance rating, 20% of the score is based on growth as measured by State tests, 20% on local tests and 60% on "other" measures including classroom observation. Under the governor's proposal, 50% of the APPR score would be based on state tests, 15% on local administrator observation and 35% on observation by an outside evaluator.

New York State presently administers federally required tests to assess year to year student performance growth in Math and English/ Language Arts (ELA) to all students in grades 3-8. Regents' exams measuring skill mastery are administered to high school students. Still other tests are administered to measure student achievement where standardized assessments may not exist. Questions for new standardized tests are also "field tested" by either administering tests to samples of students or imbedding trial questions into existing tests. Finally, teachers in classrooms every day use a wide range of diagnostic measures to guide instructional practice and identify specific student deficiencies.

NYS PTA believes that student assessment is a valid and valuable aspect of instruction but recent experience has led us to conclude that directly linking standardized student tests scores to individual teacher performance ratings has damaged the professional evaluation system and the quality of instruction it was designed to improve. We conclude that as a result of these recent changes, we test too much; our tests are far too long and we use test results for too many purposes unrelated to improvement of classroom instruction. Parents also express concern that Instructional time devoted to test preparation has increased and that instructional content has "narrowed" where tested subjects receive greater emphasis than those that are not tested. Rather than discuss alternatives, the Governor has proposed that student test results play an even greater role in individual educator evaluation. Additionally, he would diminish the role of local administrators in the review process and base non-test ratings solely on observation rather than the multiple aspects of the Regents' teaching standards, some of which may not be evident from a classroom observation. We propose the following:

- Use standardized assessments for their original purpose, as measures of educational attainment and to measure effectiveness of the school community as a whole, identifying gaps in education across schools, districts and demographic sub-groups
- Judge performance of individual educators based on how each teacher or principal uses diagnostic data to improve instruction
- Reduce the "seat time" devoted to Math and ELA testing in grades 3-8
- Appropriate \$8.4 million requested by the Education Department to eliminate stand alone field testing and increase the amount of test feedback available to teachers and parents
- Use *NYS Teaching Standards and Performance Indicators* adopted by the Regents in 2011 as the primary basis for assessing individual teacher performance as well as for building and delivering effective professional development programs
- Employ rubrics that make teacher performance assessment more objective and develop the skills of local administrators to use them
- Reject the Governor's proposal to base 35% of a performance review on outside observer judgment
- Hold local administrators responsible for productive performance review of the teachers they supervise

Talking Points: Assessing Student and Teacher Performance

- **Value standardized assessments for their original purpose**, as measures of educational attainment and to measure effectiveness of the school community as a whole, identifying gaps in education across schools, districts and demographic sub-groups.
- **Order the:**
 - **Reduction of the “seat time”** devoted to Math and ELA testing in grades 3-8
 - **Suspension of links between teacher performance and student test results** until all planned instructional reforms have been implemented
 - **Appropriation of \$8.4 million requested by the Education Department** to eliminate stand alone field testing and increase the amount of test feedback available to teachers and parents
- **Implement the use of NYS Teaching Standards and Performance Indicators** adopted by the Regents in 2011 as the primary basis for assessing individual teacher performance as well as for building and delivering effective professional development programs.
- **Create an environment that:**
 - **Judges the performance of individual educators** based on how each teacher or principal uses diagnostic data to improve instruction
 - **Holds local administrators responsible** for productive performance review of the teachers they supervise
 - **Rejects the Governor’s proposal** to base 35% of a performance review on outside observer judgment
- **Employ** rubrics that make teacher performance assessment more objective and develop the skills of local administrators to use them.

2015 Issues Brief: Funding our Schools

This year's Executive budget demands that the legislature choose between two unacceptable options before adopting a new State budget; a state aid increase which at \$1.1 billion is insufficient to even maintain current school programs and a draconian "reform" agenda that in other times would be discussed following State budget adoption. Such choices are unacceptable and possibly unconstitutional. Working with the Educational Conference Board, NYS PTA has demanded that the Governor separate these two issues, release proposed state aid details immediately and delay discussion of a program reforms until after a new budget has been adopted.

The Governor continues his portrayal of New York schools as high spending and low performance, citing graduation statistics that have more to do with experiences of earlier generations and little to do with the performance of today's schools. New York has traditionally invested heavily in education but more as a result of choices by local communities than by the State itself. New York also faces greater challenges than other states with far greater diversity, more poverty and issues related to immigration and language.

In the past several years, New York State's public schools have grappled with the combined challenges of severely diminished resources, changing demographics, increasing rates of poverty, demands for expanded pre-kindergarten services, growing populations of students of children who struggle with the English language and unprecedented challenges to prepare a new generation to succeed in a global society. As we turn the corner toward an improved fiscal condition with projections of \$2 billion state surpluses, it is imperative that we recognize these new challenges while demanding that the State honor past commitments and constitutional obligations to adequately fund our schools. The commitments we seek are not merely dollars but strategies that fairly deploy those dollars so that educational quality depends more on our collective efforts than the zip code of the school.

We can successfully address these issues but not in an environment where half of our districts receive less state support than they did in 2008 or in a property tax cap environment where the state is still \$5.7 billion short of honoring its commitments to assure resources where property taxes cannot. To remedy this situation, the state must support the \$1.9 billion state aid investment proposed by the NYS Educational Conference Board or similar proposals offered by the NYS Board of Regents and others that would:

- Eliminate the remaining \$1 billion Gap Elimination Adjustment first imposed in 2010 by no later than the 2016-17 school year
- Accelerate phase-in of \$4.7 billion in foundation aid that was originally scheduled for completion in 2011
- Honor 2014 commitments to expand pre-kindergarten programs statewide
- Fund Regents agenda to establish new and creative pathways to high school graduation
- Support a growing population of English Language Learners by fully funding mandates associated with part 154 of NYS Commissioner's Regulations and reinstating funding once made available through Limited English Proficiency (LEP) aid
- Reinstating current year growth aid to recognize the obligation for school districts to address unanticipated enrollment spikes, often the result of unaccompanied minors seeking to escape intolerable conditions in their home countries
- Reject Education Tax Credit proposals whose public cost would divert funds from traditional public education and place funding decisions in the hands of individuals and corporations rather than publically elected and appointed officials
- Reject proposals to increase numbers of charter schools until outstanding commitments to adequately fund traditional public schools have been met and until existing charters have clearly demonstrated the public value of State and local investment in their operations
- Adopt sensible adjustments to the property tax cap including elimination of the current requirement of a 60% super majority vote to exceed the 2% cap

When the state has moved from coping with deficits to contemplating annual surpluses, it ought to first recall that it has past commitments and new obligations to support on behalf of our students. It would be irresponsible for the legislature not to honor these priorities.

Talking Points: Funding Our Schools

- **Voice the need to:**
 - **Eliminate the remaining \$1 billion Gap Elimination Adjustment** first imposed in 2010 by no later than the 2016-17 school year
 - **Accelerate phase-in of \$4.7 billion in foundation aid** that was originally scheduled for completion in 2011
 - **Adopt sensible adjustments to the property tax cap** including elimination of the current requirement of a 60% super majority vote to exceed the 2% cap
- **Object and reject:**
 - **Education Tax Credit proposals** whose public cost would divert funds from traditional public education and place funding decisions in the hands of individuals and corporations rather than publically elected and appointed officials
 - **Proposals to increase numbers of charter schools** until outstanding commitments to adequately fund traditional public schools have been met and until existing charters have clearly demonstrated the public value of State and local investment in their operations
- **Implement and honor 2014 commitments to:**
 - **Expand pre-kindergarten** programs statewide
 - **Fund the Regents agenda** to establish new and creative pathways to high school graduation
- **Consider and address** supporting a growing population of **English Language Learners** by fully funding mandates associated with part 154 of NYS Commissioner's Regulations and reinstating funding once made available through Limited English Proficiency (LEP) aid.
- **Expedite the reinstatement of current year growth aid** to recognize the obligation for school districts to address unanticipated enrollment spikes, often the result of unaccompanied minors seeking to escape intolerable conditions in their home countries.

Dear _____,

Date _____

We urge you to reject the Governor's proposed revisions to the Annual Professional review (APPR) process in favor of a system based on Regents Teaching standards Adopted in 2011. The system we propose would:

- Use standardized tests for their original purpose of measuring effectiveness of the school community as a whole
- Judge performance of individual educators based on how they use diagnostic data to improve instruction and suspend links between teacher performance and student test results until all planned instructional reforms have been implemented
- Reduce time devoted to standardized Math and ELA testing in grades 3-8
- Appropriate \$8.4million that would permit the Education Department to eliminate stand alone field testing of test items and make more feedback on student performance available to teachers
- Use Regents adopted NYS Teaching Standards as the primary strategy for rating individual teachers and establishing the basis for developing and delivering effective professional development
- Employ rubrics that make teacher reviews more objective and develop the skills of administrators to use them
- Hold local administrators responsible for productive performance review of the teachers they supervise.

Name: _____

Address: _____



Signed: _____

Dear _____,

Date _____

We urge you to adopt the NYS Educational Conference Board's \$1.9 billion state aid proposal. This proposal, developed in partnership with NYS PTA, would appropriate \$1.2 billion to avoid new program cuts and \$700 million in additional funding to:

- Eliminate the remaining \$1 billion Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA by no later than the 2016-17 school year
- Accelerate phase-in of \$4.7 billion in Foundation Aid that was originally scheduled for completion by 2011
- Honor commitments made a year ago to expand pre-kindergarten programs statewide
- Fund Regents efforts to establish new and creative pathways to High school graduation
- Support new populations of immigrants and unaccompanied minors by reinstating funding once made available through Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and current year growth aids

We further urge you to:

- Reject Education Tax Credit proposals whose public cost would divert funds from traditional public education
- Reject proposals to increase numbers of charter schools until outstanding commitments to adequately fund traditional public schools have been met
- Reform the local property tax cap by eliminating the current 60% super majority vote to exceed the 2% cap.

Name: _____

Address: _____



Signed: _____



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