

## HOLD THE PRESSES!!!

I had just finished revisions to the February Update in regard to contacting your Assemblymen to ask them to support a delay in Common Core implementation - when from left field came the following press release from NYSED! My Update message was, perhaps, no longer needed! It would seem as though the combination of public beatings over the last several months and legislators speaking out in support of changes to Common Core had forced the State's hand. Perhaps, the SED had found some Common Sense. Before you get overly optimistic though, please note that Governor Cuomo has his own agenda.

I am awaiting guidance from NYSUT with further information about how these changes may affect us. Stay tuned and please, read on...

In Unity,

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE February 10, 2014 REGENTS ADJUST COMMON CORE IMPLEMENTATION**

Full Implementation Delayed until 2022

Teachers, Students Protected from Impact of Assessment Transition  
inBloom Delayed

The State Board of Regents P-12 Education and Higher Education Committees today adopted several measures presented in a report from a Regents' work group to adjust the implementation of the new Common Core Standards. The full Board is expected to act on the Committee reports tomorrow (Tuesday, February 11th). Included are changes that will delay the impact of Common Core-related state assessments on educators and students, and reduce the level of local school district testing associated with the new teacher evaluation law and higher standards for teaching and learning.

"We have listened to the concerns of parents and teachers," Board of Regents Chancellor Merryl H. Tisch said. "We've heard the concerns expressed at the hearings and forums, and we regret that the urgency of our work, and the unevenness of implementation, have caused frustration and anxiety for some of our educators, students, and their families. This report is designed to make significant and timely changes to improve our shared goal of implementing the Common Core. We have heard strong support for higher standards, but we have also heard a desire for more time. The Regents work group put together a series of strong adjustments that will help improve implementation without sacrificing the high standards we've set for our students. These changes will help give principals, teachers, parents and students the time to adjust to the new standards without stopping our progress toward the goal we all share: college and career readiness for every student."

"Any major shift – especially one involving 700 school districts, more than 4500 schools, and millions of students—is going to require adjustments and course corrections along the way," Education Commissioner John B. King, Jr. said. "The implementation of the higher standards has been uneven, and these changes will help strengthen the important work happening in schools throughout the state. As challenging as implementation has been, we have to remember one important fact: the old standards were not adequate. Every year, despite our state's many excellent districts and schools, 140,000 students leave high school without the skills they need for college and career success. We have to stay focused on giving all of our students the preparation they need to succeed after high school."

Rochester area Regent Wade Norwood chaired the work group. "When the Board approved the shift to the Common Core four years ago, we knew we would have to make adjustments as the standards rolled out," Norwood said. "The work group balanced the concerns all of us have heard with the progress we've made toward raising the bar for our students. The changes we've made protect teachers and students from unforeseen and unintended consequences of the implementation without damaging the foundation we've built to help our students succeed in the 21st century."

Under the changes, the requirement to pass Common Core-based Regents exams at the college and career ready level will be extended. The class of 2022 will be the first to face the new higher graduation requirements, 12 years after the adoption of the standards in 2010. To ensure that students are not unfairly penalized by the transition to higher standards, the requirements for Academic Intervention Services (mandatory tutoring for struggling students) will be adjusted and guidance will be issued to districts making clear that the State Education Department (SED) neither requires nor encourages districts to make promotion or placement decisions using student performance on state assessments in grades 3-8, but if districts choose to do so, they should make adjustments to ensure students are not negatively impacted by the Common Core transition and should use multiple measures - not grades 3-8 state assessment results alone.

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The State has not created any additional tests as part of Common Core implementation. All required state tests other than two high school social studies Regents exams – including all grades 3-8 assessments and high school exams in English, Math, and Science – are required by federal law. However, King noted, the Board recognized that a variety of pressures at the state and local level may have resulted in students in some districts being tested more than needed or rote standardized test preparation that crowds out quality instruction. The measures approved by the two committees today will reduce local testing by:

- Increasing flexibility for districts to reduce local testing used to inform teacher evaluation
- Creating an expedited review process for districts that propose to amend their teacher evaluation plans to reduce local testing
- Eliminating local traditional standardized tests for K-2 used to inform teacher evaluations (The State does not administer traditional standardized tests in K-2.)
- Capping at 1% the instructional time that can be used for local assessments used to inform teacher evaluations (The federally required State assessments in grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics account for less than 1% of instructional time.)

In addition, the Board and SED will support reducing standardized testing by local school districts through "Teaching is the Core" grants that require districts to review their local assessments and eliminate any unnecessary or duplicative assessments. King noted that New York's participation in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) will be limited to field testing only during the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years. Although only 1 percent of teachers were rated ineffective in the first year of statewide teacher evaluations, the measure approved by the committees today will provide added protection for educators by approving an emergency regulation to protect teachers and principals from unfair termination based on 2012-13 and 2013-14 assessment results in districts that did not timely implement the Common Core by providing adequate professional development, guidance on curriculum, or other necessary supports.

King also announced the State has delayed the launch of the data dashboards related to inBloom to allow SED to work with legislators to address concerns about data security and third party providers used by the State and districts.

The P-12 committee also approved SED applying to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) to renew the State's waiver from No Child Left Behind (the Elementary and Secondary Education Act). As part of the waiver renewal, SED will ask USDOE to allow students with severe disabilities who are not eligible for alternate assessments to be tested at their instructional level rather than their chronological age level, and allow English Language Learners to be tested in their native language for their first two years of assessments. In addition, the work group reaffirmed the Board's request to the legislature to fund a three year, \$525 million Core Instructional Development Fund aimed at providing increased professional development for Common Core implementation, and to provide increased funding to reduce field testing, allow for the release of more test items, and support the development of native language arts assessments for English Language Learners.

Earlier this year, USDOE approved the request for a waiver from the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) requirement that students who take Regents exams in mathematics when they are in seventh or eighth grade to also take the state mathematics assessment. The waiver will effectively end the "double-testing" of approximately 50,000 students, beginning with the spring 2014 assessments.

**The full report of the Work Group is available at:**

**<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2014/February2014/214p12hea3.pdf>**

### **Here is Governor Cuomo's statement in response to NYSED's press release:**

"Today's recommendations are another in a series of missteps by the Board of Regents that suggests the time has come to seriously reexamine its capacity and performance. These recommendations are simply too little, too late for our parents and students.

"Common Core is the right goal and direction as it is vital that we have a real set of standards for our students and a meaningful teacher evaluation system. However, Common Core's implementation in New York has been flawed and mismanaged from the start.

"As far as today's recommendations are concerned, there is a difference between remedying the system for students and parents and using this situation as yet another excuse to stop the teacher evaluation process.

"The Regents' response is to recommend delaying the teacher evaluation system and is yet another in a long series of roadblocks to a much needed evaluation system which the Regents had stalled putting in place for years.

"I have created a commission to thoroughly examine how we can address these issues. The commission has started its work and we should await their recommendations so that we can find a legislative solution this session to solve these problems."