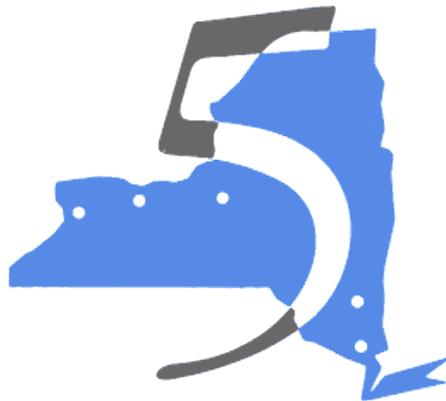


Conference of Big 5 School Districts
Testimony Before the
New York State Senate
Standing Committee on Education
For the Public Hearing:
The Regents Reform Agenda:
"Assessing" Our Progress



October 1, 2013

Presented By:
Jennifer K. Pyle, Deputy Director
Conference of Big 5 School Districts

Good morning. I want to begin by thanking you for affording us this opportunity to comment on the Regents Reform Agenda and for your steadfast support of the Big 5 school districts and the students we serve. We are grateful for your ongoing commitment to encouraging thoughtful and productive dialogue on these critical issues.

Each of the Big 5 School Districts are working diligently to implement the provisions of the Regents Reform Agenda as a part of their efforts to improve student performance and bridge the achievement gap. Several of the Big 5 Chief School Officers will be testifying before you, therefore I will limit my remarks to general comments and concerns and allow them to address these issues in greater detail.

As you are aware, the Big 5 school districts are faced with a multitude of obstacles including the highest ELL/LEP populations and percentages of pupils with disabilities in the State. Furthermore, the vast majority of the students we serve live in poverty. Despite these challenges, each of the Big 5 have embraced the Common

Core Standards and are committed to ensuring that each and every child is afforded a chance to succeed.

However, implementation of the Common Core Standards with fidelity and success will require more time and additional resources. Each and every child deserves a world-class education and every student should graduate career and college ready. However, existing resources are not enough to ensure that we are able to provide the necessary professional development our educators need to stay on top of the ever-changing new curriculum and assessments.

In addition, as the State moves forward with aggressive updates to already complex instructional data systems it is imperative that the existing infrastructure of our school districts is not stretched to a breaking point. The Big 5 have embraced many of the changes and appreciate the value of using timely data to drive instruction. However, often times the assessment and scoring calendars are at odds with a district's ability to budget and plan accordingly.

We recognize and value the importance of a reliable and effective State assessment and accountability system but believe that much work needs to be done to address deficiencies in the current system. New York State's testing system has grown to levels that the State Education Department and school districts cannot afford to maintain. It is essential that the State work with school leaders to evaluate the current system and consider changes that will result in a viable system for the State, school districts and, most importantly, the children being served.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to continuing a dialogue on these important issues. We would also welcome the opportunity to coordinate a meeting with the Big 5 Chief School Officers to discuss these issues further.