

New York State Council of Educational Associations, NYSCEA
Questions for Commissioner Steiner
May 2010

Respectfully submitted by Grace Wilkie,
President of NYSCEA 2009-2011

Q1. Many reports indicate communication with or engaging with the 'educational community'. How does the Commissioner define 'educational community'?

The University of the State of New York (USNY) is the most complete, interconnected system of educational services in the United States. USNY includes public, private and proprietary schools; public and private colleges and universities; libraries, museums, state archives; Vocational rehabilitation and other services for adults with disabilities; special education services for pre-school and school-age children and teenagers; a School for the Blind; a School for the Deaf; public broadcasting facilities; professionals practicing in 48 licensed professions; certified public school teachers, counselors, and administrators.

Q2. How will the Commissioner capitalize on the collaborative work of NYSCEA and NYS professional associations so it can become a resource for curriculum building and professional development ensuring that all students receive quality education?

- *Today's NYSCEA agenda demonstrates our collaborative partnership. You are beginning to discuss and work with SED subject specialists for English language arts and mathematics, including the on-going NYSCEA workgroup activities for the "NYS Professional Development Standards" initiative with the Office of Teacher Quality and Professional Development.*
- *NYSED looks forward to enhancing the relationship with NYSCEA. We need support from professional associations to:*
 - *disseminate information for NYS 'reform efforts;*
 - *assess the needs of your professional associations, administrators and teachers and provide field-based feedback to SED;*
 - *help NYSED identify researched –based best practices that articulate the assurance areas in RTTT and reform priorities.*

Q3. How will the Commissioner interact and communicate with NYSCEA and the educational organizations?

- *NYSED leadership and staff will consider an initial meeting with NYSCEA's Executive Board, after NYSCEA develops and submits a cross-walk document for NYS's education reform agenda and RTTT initiatives. The cross-walk should provide information about NYSCEA's' potential role for NYS's education reform agenda and RTTT priorities/areas: Enhanced Standards and Assessments, Great Teacher and School Leaders, Data Systems and Low Performing Schools, Common Core Standards, STEM and addressing the needs of underrepresented populations women and minorities, on-line learning etc.*

Q4. What opportunities exist so that the Commissioner can partner with NYSCEA in developing priorities for our vast, diverse memberships?

NYSCEA can continue to support the SED's efforts to increase the high school graduation rates and ensure all students receive a quality education by implementing the following actions/steps:

- *Review all pertinent Regents' items (Teacher Preparation, Common Core Standards, Virtual High School, Professional Development Standards, College/Career Readiness; Low Performing Schools, STEM etc.) that are applicable to NYSCEA's responsibilities, and that articulate with student achievement results; teacher quality initiatives and professional development (PD) goals;*
- *Collaborate with SED staff to design training models/modules for NYS education reform priorities (like identifying best practices for USNY/P-12- College Readiness initiatives; Career and Technical Education; STEM, Arts and on-line learning etc.);*
- *Create and implement professional development products/tools, including designing "strategic PD delivery systems" to build the capacity of administrators and teachers; to increase student performance levels in Low Performing Schools and improve graduation rates;*
- *Provide on-going input and feedback to SED; let us know about roadblocks (regulations, policies or other items) that hinder student achievement progress and impact graduation results statewide.*

We need to collectively ensure that students and teachers are engaged in their learning and teaching, and that school is both meeting students' current needs, and adequately preparing them for college and careers.

Teacher Preparation

Q5.1- What specific changes does the Commissioner want to implement in pre-service training of teachers?

Teacher preparation must be more focused on preparing the next generation of teachers with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to have a positive impact on the growth and achievement of all of their students. It is important that the assessments of pre-service and in-service teachers are rigorous and assess for the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the expectations of the Department. Staff is currently working with our partners in developing a core set of teaching standards that will provide the public, preparation programs, and school districts with a common base for assessing preparation program candidates during their program and teachers during their career in teaching.

- *One of the major changes we will make in the pre-service training of teachers is the support and development of richer, more extensive, and better supervised clinical experiences.*
- *SED will be implementing new Regents policy in the type of assessments required of teacher preparation program graduates. The assessments of teaching skills will be a performance-based assessment rather than an all-written examination. Also, the rigor of the*

Content Specialty Tests will be increased by requiring that all teaching candidates demonstrate evidence of effective teaching.

- *Under the Race to the Top application, we propose to create a clinically-based undergraduate teacher preparation model focused on serving the needs of students in the performance gap in high need schools, as well as create a model induction program for new teachers designed to create “teacher leaders” (i.e., teachers who are skilled at collaboratively using data to drive improved instruction, teachers who seek out continuous feedback on their instruction, etc.)*
- *At the April Board of Regents meeting, the Regents adopted a measure relating to the establishment of a pilot program for graduate-level clinically rich teacher preparation programs.*
- *At its November meeting, the Board of Regents gave conceptual approval to several new initiatives on transforming teaching; one of which is to begin development of a NYSED profile for each certifying institution, including data on program graduate performance on both the performance-based assessment for initial certification and the performance-based assessment for professional certification (including value-added student assessment data).*

Q5.2- How can NYSCEA and the educational associations work with the Commissioner and the department to support pre and post service development experiences for our teachers?

Members of NYSCEA have participated in field surveys and submitted comments on a variety of issues over time, and we hope they continue to do so. We appreciate that a representative is currently involved in the work group developing Teaching Standards for review by the Regents in the fall.

Q6. How can the Commissioner and the SED raise awareness of the need for more teachers in specific instructional areas including math, science, technology education, foreign language, family and consumer science, special education, etc.?

Using available teacher supply and demand data, New York is able to identify those certification and content areas in which the schools in New York are experiencing difficulty in filling open positions. This information is made available through the Department's website and department staff provides this information as they visit colleges and present at statewide conferences and activities.

Under the Race to the Top application, we propose new incentives to recruit and retain teachers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) disciplines in high need schools, including:

- *An expedited pathway to encourage scientists, engineers, and mathematicians with doctoral or master's degrees with higher education teaching experience to teach in our State's high need middle and high schools;*
- *A new differential incentive to recruit and retain teachers to support the learning needs of students in STEM disciplines in the State's high need schools. Effective teachers in high need schools certified in STEM disciplines (or teachers of English*

language learners or students with disabilities supporting teachers in STEM disciplines) would be eligible to receive as much as a \$30,000 total bonus over the course of five years.

Also, the Office of Higher Education has published annual updates to its Teacher Supply and Demand analysis on its Web pages. These data help all parties know where shortages exist.

Q7.1 How will the certification of teachers be changed in terms of process and content?

The basic certification structure is not expected to change in any significant way other than the change in the certification for teachers of students with disabilities that was adopted by the Board of Regents in March 2010. The Regents endorsed a change in that certification that would result in three certificates in the students with disabilities area, early childhood birth to grade 2, Childhood grades 1 to 6, and Adolescence grades 7-12. The Middle Childhood 5-9 certifications will not exist in the students with disabilities area.

At its November meeting, the Regents supported a number of new initiatives to strengthen teacher preparation; these include:

- Establishing performance-based assessments for initial certification for teachers and principals;*
- Establishing performance-based assessments (including student performance data) for professional certification of new teachers;*
- Developing a more rigorous Content Specialty Test to assess new teachers' mastery of knowledge in the content area in which they will be teaching;*
- Allowing secondary-level certification applicants to use alternative means to demonstrate content knowledge with work experience and acceptable rigorous examinations in combination with undergraduate/graduate-level coursework.*

Q7.2 Can the Commissioner inform us about the early childhood education federal initiative planned for 2010?

The administration in Washington continues to be staunch supporters of education reform. They understand the importance of education to our economy and are committed to supporting all children and the improvement of our education system. At every level, there is groundbreaking work underway to change the way we teach and learn.

Although the current economic climate is challenging, there is a broad consensus that we must invest at every level—from early childhood through college to help the next generation be successful.

I would like to share with you highlights of current Federal initiatives, possible Early Childhood funding opportunities in the proposed FY 2011 Budget, and ways in which SED is ready to move forward.

First I would like to update you on the **Early Learning Challenge Fund:**

- On March 19th, this initiative which would support states implementing model early education systems was removed from the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA).
- Although there is no specific plan currently, the administration is looking for another avenue to finance early childhood education initiatives.
- NYSED is poised and committed to respond to future opportunities
 - In January 2006, the Board of Regents adopted a comprehensive policy on early education. This policy has been the basis of many initiatives and advocacy which have reshaped early education in the state.
 - In January 2010, The Board of Regents convened an Early Childhood Workgroup. The charge to the group is to answer the following:
 - What capacity will SED need to build to be in a competitive position for Federal funding focused on early education?
 - Does the current policy framework meet the demand of the Department P-12 reform initiatives?
 - Has sufficient emphasis been placed on using early childhood as an effective strategy for closing the achievement gap or as part of a P-12 continuum?
 - What policies are needed to provide for a cohesive and comprehensive service delivery system focused on birth through age 5 that will be addressed in the Early Learning Challenge Fund?

Looking ahead: The Early Childhood Workgroup will continue to meet and make recommendations to the Board of Regents.

SED is reviewing and responding to requests from the federal government for feedback on the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

- a. The Obama administration's blueprint to overhaul the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) will support state and local efforts to help ensure that all students graduate prepared for college and a career.
- b. The blueprint builds on the significant reforms already made in response to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 around four areas:
 1. Improving teacher and principal effectiveness to ensure that every classroom has a great teacher and every school has a great leader;
 2. Providing information to families to help them evaluate and improve their children's schools, and to educators to help them improve their students' learning;
 3. Implementing college- and career-ready standards and developing improved assessments aligned with those standards; and
 4. Improving student learning and achievement in America's lowest-performing schools by providing intensive support and effective interventions.

**The Blueprint does not mention Early Education specifically. However, the Department has responded to requests for feedback and strongly believes that Early Childhood must be an integral component in preparing children for college and careers. A few of the recommendations that SED has proposed are as follows:*

- *Ensure that prekindergarten and kindergarten standards are comprehensive and rigorous. These standards must be directly linked to grades 1 – 3 and re-enforce 21st Century skills.*
 - *Establish a separate Title for Early Education with funding that would support state prekindergarten initiatives and full day kindergarten. Formulas should include 3 and 4 year old students.*
 - *Allow current Title I dollars to be directed to prekindergarten programs more supportively.*
 - *Support development of valid and reliable measurement tools for early childhood classrooms.*
 - *Accountability mechanisms must include appropriate data from prekindergarten – grade 2.*
- c. *Included are the following grants which are part of the new proposal with a request for \$450 million*
- *Effective Teaching and Learning: Literacy*
 - *Early Reading First*
 - *Striving Readers*
 - *Even Start*
 - *Literacy through School Libraries*
 - *National Writing Project*
 - *Reading Is Fundamental*
 - *Ready-to-Learn Television*

Proposed early education grants in President Obama’s budget for FY 2011

The following proposed grants are of great interest to SED. They support the direction that the Board of Regents is moving towards in order to support our educational communities to enable all students to be 21st Century ready.

Promise Neighborhoods

- *NYS has several programs which conceptually mirror the intent of the proposed projects. We are now in the process of looking at best practices.*
- *Grants to non-profit CBO’s for youth preschool to college to build neighborhood programs, so that children may succeed in school and beyond*
- *The FY 2011 Budget is requesting \$210 million*

Effective Teaching and Learning: Literacy

- *Proposed new program would provide competitive State literacy grants to support comprehensive State and local efforts aimed at improving literacy instruction, especially in high-need schools. This funding would support SED efforts to turn around low-performing schools and close the achievement gap.*
- *The program would build on the progress the Department seeks to achieve in fiscal year 2010 through the revised Striving Readers program, which replaces reading programs segmented by grade level with a more comprehensive pre-K through grade 12 authorization.*
- *Fall 2009--NYS is currently in year one of a four year cycle to implement a Striving Readers grant with a program being implemented in NYC with middle school students*

Early Reading First

Fall 2009, 28 grants were awarded nationwide. Three recipients are from NYS- Binghamton City School District, Olean Central School District, and the Eastern Suffolk BOCES

- Part of the President's "Good Start, Grow Smart" initiative, is designed to transform existing early education programs into centers of excellence that provide high-quality, early education to young children, especially those from low-income families.
- The overall purpose of the Early Reading First Program is to prepare young children to enter kindergarten with the necessary language, cognitive, and early reading skills to prevent reading difficulties and ensure school success.

Teacher Quality Partnership

- Designed To improve the quality of teachers working in high need schools and Early Childhood programs by creating model teacher preparation programs
- The Board of Regents is in the process of reflecting on next steps to improve our teacher education programs and professional development.

Around the nation The USDOE continues its listening and learning meetings. The intent is to inform the work of USDOE and Health and Human Services (HHS) around early learning (Birth through 3rd Grade) during the month of April and during the first two weeks of May. The tour made stops in Washington DC, Denver, Orlando and Chicago. The meetings focused on the following topics:

- Understanding Preschool – Grade 3 Structures
- Workforce and Professional Development
- Family Engagement
- Standards and Assessments.

These meetings were led by Secretary Duncan's senior advisor on early learning, Jacqueline Jones, and HHS's Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development at the Administration for Children and Families, Joan Lombardi. The meetings will help inform the work of USDOE and HHS around early learning.

Q7.3 Will there be other certification areas, i.e. 7-12 Generalist Certificate?

The 7-12 generalist certification has been endorsed by the Board of Regents in the area of Teaching Students with Disabilities only. This certification will not be available for persons certified to teach in the general education adolescence classroom. These generalists will be expected to collaborate with specific 7-12 discipline certified teachers in subject areas in which they do not meet the "highly qualified" expectations as defined by the US Department of Ed.

Deputy Commissioner Joseph Frey sent a memo to the field on April 14, 2010 seeking further comments, through an online survey by May 17th, on the proposed changes in certification related to students with disabilities. While time for completing the survey is almost concluded, you may provide comments through response to that one-page survey by May 17th.

Q8. What is the Commissioner's thinking about providing merit pay to teachers? If that comes to pass, what will the criteria be?

Although teacher salaries and pay scales are negotiated locally, under the Race to the Top application, we proposed the creation of a statewide teacher career ladder based upon effective teaching practice, which improves student learning; which school districts and local collective bargaining agents could use as a framework for bargaining teachers' compensation.

The Board of Regents has adopted new regulations for the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) for teachers, designed to more clearly differentiate teacher effectiveness (e.g. highly effective, effective, developing, and ineffective) employing multiple measures, including student achievement and student growth data. This is another policy initiative where the Regents have provided a structure which the local district and union could use to bargain compensation and other terms and conditions of employment based upon a teacher's effectiveness in raising student achievement.

SED Personnel

Q9. How will the Curriculum / Instruction / Assessment personnel of the State Education Department relate to and rely upon the State's professional education organizations?

NYSED collaborates with professional education organizations in numerous ways with a primary focus on improving student achievement throughout NYS. The Department and the professional organizations have a long standing, collaborative relationship, jointly developing standards, core curriculum documents, related guidance materials and professional development programs. We envision this long term collaboration continuing. Communication between NYSED and the professional organizations occurs in meaningful ways including monthly conference calls, face-to-face meetings with Executive Boards, and various online resources such as E-blast; Virtual Learning System, and the Curriculum, Instruction, and Instructional Technology and Office of State Assessment SED web pages.

SED is committed to continuing this partnership with New York's professional organizations through face-to-face and virtual meetings; ongoing partnerships like the Mathematics Advisory Council; committee work involving assessments, and the development of standards and curriculum guidance materials.

Q10. Some of our associations have reported on the lack of knowledgeable SED resource people and associates within their field. What can the New York State Education Department do to facilitate the hiring of associates so that each standards area has the appropriate resource personnel available to the teachers and their associations? In addition, due to budget constraints, there are concerns about the subject area and assessment associates attending the annual professional organizations conferences. How might this concern be resolved?

The Department continues to advocate for positions keeping in mind the current budget constraints.

Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment

Q11. Now that math and ELA's Common Core Standards have gone through their review, what will be the anticipated process and timeline be for implementing these at the State level? Will the SED be adopting and other Standards from other areas?

In December 2009, the Board of Regents approved a timeline for review and adoption of Common Core ELA and Mathematics Standards.

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2009Meetings/December2009/1209emsca1.htm>

However, the posted timeline needs to be adjusted since there have been changes to the release dates of the Common Core ELA and Mathematics Standards documents.

Currently, the Board of Regents is scheduled to approve the Common Core State Standards for ELA and Mathematics in July 2010, with the development of additional recommended standards (up to 15%) to add to the Common Core scheduled to begin in summer 2010.

In the fall, the Board of Regents will share new draft ELA and Mathematics documents that include the recommended 15% and ask for public feedback. After the approval of the 15% by the Board of Regents, SED will begin the development of curriculum frameworks for ELA and Mathematics and implement the new standards.

New York State is open to partnering with other states to develop common standards in other areas, such as science and social studies.

Q12. What will be the assessment for math and ELA look like? Will they be written by NYS teachers or will they be nationally written?

Like other States, we are reviewing our testing program to ensure its future alignment with the national common core standards. In light of this, we have researched the work of several assessment consortia that have emerged across the nation. We have chosen to work with the Achieve Consortium, as a governing State. In this capacity, NY will make significant decisions regarding the design and implementation of future math and ELA test designs. We have begun conversations with this group, composed of national assessment experts; no decisions have been made regarding the nature of future math and ELA assessments. Currently, NYS teachers do not write the items for the 3-8 tests, they only select them. Their involvement in the development of common core assessments has not been determined.

Q13. What role do you see for the educational professional associations involved in the review and revision of New York State's Standards?

*SED is committed to partnering with New York's professional organizations in the review and revision of New York's Standards. During the recent revisions to the ELA Standards, several members of the New York State English Council, New York State Reading Association, and Staff and Curriculum Development Network provided their expertise and support in the writing of new standards. The Mathematics Standards Committee included members from the educational professional organizations, as well. As the State moves into the review and revision of the learning standards in other areas, and in the development of curriculum guidance and implementation of new standards and assessments, it is crucial that we **continue to partner** with NYSCEA and its organizations to ensure practitioner input and active engagement of the field.*

Q14. After we have been awarded RTTT monies, how will the SED go forward with Race to the Top and Common Core Standards plans that include ALL 28 Standards?

In the State's Round One Race to the Top Application, a process and timeline for adopting Common Core Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics, was presented, with an additional timeline that includes reviewing other NY State Standards and creating new curriculum frameworks in science, technology, social studies, and other standard areas such as the arts and economics. New York is dedicated to reviewing all K-12 student achievement expectations, as well as early education requirements, to ensure students are challenged and being prepared for college and careers.

For more specificity on the timeline for review of all standards, please see the Race to the Top application on NYSED's home page, Section B, pages 94-95.

http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/docs/NYS_RT TT_VlandVII_SelectionCriteriaandCompetitionPriorities.pdf

Q15. How can we ensure that literacy (not only reading, writing, listening, speaking, but also viewing and presenting) are embedded in the standards, performance indicators, and curricula of each discipline as they are reviewed and revised?

We agree that embedding literacy expectations into all content area learning standards will help students to become college-and career-ready. According to the National Governors Association in 2005, 40% of high school graduates lack the literacy skills employers seek.

The Board of Regents has committed to infusing literacy throughout the content areas through the Standards Review Working Principles,

<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/standardsreview/StandardReviewWorkingPrinciplesfinal7.17.08.mht>

As the State reviews and designs new standards and curriculum frameworks, the inclusion of literacy and communication skills across the content areas will be a focus and priority.

Q16. Where does NYS stand on STEM? What will be the anticipated process and timeline be for implementing STEM at the State level?

Mathematics, science, and technology are required program areas which are taught in our schools and supported with their own learning standard. Engineering Design is a Key Idea located under the technology Learning Standard #5, as well as the Analysis, Inquiry, and Design Learning Standard #1.

Our extensive work being done through the Title I office through 1003(g) efforts has us well positioned to continue to carry out our work regarding underrepresented populations and women in the STEM disciplines in general. Statewide activity with K-12 and Institutions of Higher Education also will continue to support the work that is being done under MST #5.

Q17. How can we ensure that future assessments include tasks that promote higher-level thinking, such as constructed response, open-ended tasks, authentic tasks, and portfolios?

It is our specific intent to ensure that future exams test higher order thinking skills and meet the specifications for critical thinking and performance-based work. We are confident this will be accomplished.

Middle School

Q18. Can you share with us where the middle grades are on your list of priorities? What specific plans you have for strengthening middle-level education and for ensuring that middle-level schools are in compliance with Commissioners' Regulations?

NY State is embarking upon a major reform plan that will improve teaching and learning at all levels. These reforms include clinically rich teacher preparation programs, a world class set of standards and sequenced spiraled curriculum frameworks leading to the attainment of those standards, a robust data system that will enable teachers to monitor their student progress and adjust instruction so that all students, in all elementary, middle level and secondary schools meet with success.

Q19. As we move to implement the SED acknowledged Middle Level Essential Elements Initiative best practices, how will the Commissioner provide the public support, cooperation, and counsel?

The Regents have seen fit to adopt a policy, in the form of the Essential Elements of Standards Focused Middle Level Schools and Programs, that very eloquently albeit very broadly, describes what a high quality program would include in the Middle Grades. Element 2, for example, calls for challenging, purposeful standards based programming, Element 5 requires a strong educational leadership, Element 7 focuses ongoing planned purposeful professional development. As educators, I think we can agree that these are important characteristics for programs at all levels.

Programs across NY are extremely diverse and there is no single way to implement these very important elements. Many schools are doing a good job of the business of teaching and learning while others, sadly, are struggling. The state's reform initiatives will provide the basis for those struggling schools to avail themselves of resources and supports that will hopefully make the difference for their programs and their students. In the meantime we continue to work at the business of providing the research, resources and best practices to aid all schools in NY.

High School

Q20. What is the status of the Virtual High School Initiative? How will students be selected? How will the online courses be aligned with NYS Standards? How will they be evaluated?

NYSED is currently assisting local school districts and BOCES in their efforts to develop or expand online learning opportunities statewide. This month, the Regional Information Centers (RICs) will distribute a survey, co-sponsored by NYSED, to all NYS school districts. This survey will assess the interests and needs of districts statewide regarding online learning. At present,

the Virtual High School Initiative will consist of growing and interconnecting a network of online learning programs statewide. Student enrollment in online courses, course alignment to NYS Standards, and course evaluations are all areas to be addressed in the initiative. We will continue to keep NYSCEA involved in and updated on this initiative as we seek public input on its development.

Q21. What changes are taking place regarding High School Diploma Requirements, High School Assessments, and GED policy and program? Will there be alternate pathways to earning credit?

The Regents College and Career Readiness Workgroup is addressing the statewide policy on GED testing and our overall GED protocols. At the March BOR meeting, the Regents did accept the short term recommendations as expressed in the item on GED testing.
<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2010Meetings/March2010/0310ccrd1.doc>

Long term goals will include access to the Official Practice Test (OPT) which will ensure greater student readiness for success on the GED test. In addition, the Regents want to expand successful bridge programs that support students in moving from GED preparation to higher education, post secondary training, and/or the workforce. We are also waiting for final legislative and executive action on the Regents \$2 million budget request to support ongoing GED testing and access.

The Regents Workgroup is also continuing to address the issues of high school graduation requirements and high school testing mandates. This work is chaired by Regent Anthony Bottar and will be more fully developed over the next few months. The Regents have and will continue to get input from various national researchers and from a wide variety of NYS stakeholders.

Yes, there are initiatives underway to provide alternative ways for students to earn credit. The Board of Regents recently approved the addition of a new section to the Commissioner's Regulations prescribing requirements for making up course credit. This will become effective July 1, 2010.

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2010Meetings/April2010/0410brca1.doc>

Also, department staff is currently working on regulations for schools to offer students the ability to earn elective credits towards a Regents diploma through independent study.

The Regents College and Career Readiness Workgroup is addressing the statewide policy on GED testing, overall GED protocols, and broad policy related to future changes in diploma requirements. At the March meeting, the Regents accepted the short term recommendations as expressed in the item on GED testing.

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2010Meetings/March2010/0310ccrd1.doc>

Charter Schools

Q22. With the increasing number of Charter Schools being approved and being granted provisional charters, how does the Commissioner compare the Charter School to the public school system? What can be garnered from each to ensure quality education for all students?

- *Public charter schools are empowered to create academic programs and operational structures outside the bounds of traditional school districts. They are held accountable for*

their academic and operational performance through a system of checks and balances. They are not allowed to operate without accountability for public funding. Public charter schools are innovative ways to approach school. I am proud that New York State has some of the highest performing charter schools in the country, serving students from some of our highest-need communities: Achievement First in New York City; KIPP in Albany and New York City; Uncommon Schools in Rochester, Troy, and New York City; the Buffalo Charter School for Applied Technology; and the Harlem Children's Zone schools.

- *The Board of Regents believe strongly that public charter schools, carefully approved and held accountable for their results, are a critically important element in making good public schools available to the children of our state. The Regents are committed to being an excellent charter authorizer, granting charters only to the most qualified applicants, carefully monitoring academic and operational performance, and revoking charters when schools fail to meet standards. The Regents have asked the Legislature to strengthen the accountability and transparency elements of the charter school statute as part of raising the charter cap.*
- *The Board of Regents, and I are committed to maintaining and improving charter authorizing practices that incorporate rigorous performance-based accountability while still protecting the autonomy of charter schools. Above all, authorization and oversight of charter public schools in New York State must protect our students and ensure that public funds are spent effectively and efficiently.*

Budget

Q23. There are reductions in SED monies which results in deficits (projected deficits \$11.5 million for 2010-2011 and \$21.3 million for 2011-2012). What are the Commissioner's budget priorities? What is the status of downsizing the assessment program?

We are committed to ensuring a reliable high-quality state testing program. There are significant fiscal problems and consequently a great degree of uncertainty. We have been gathering input from stakeholders on which tests are important and why. Any decision to be made regarding changes to the NYSTP will only be made after careful consideration of the effect and implications of the proposed changes and after extensive conversations with representatives from the education community across the State. One thing is certain, we can not compromise the assessments required by federal statute; those tests will continue. The Board of Regents will decide on the testing program's future. As of now, no final decisions have been made. The Department is waiting for the approval of the State budget to decide on next steps.