

**EXCERPT FROM NYSCEA MINUTES - May 14, 2010:
PRESENTATION BY Dr. David M. Steiner, President University of the State of
New York and Commissioner of Education**

Handout: Letter to District Superintendents and Superintendent Colleagues

The Commissioner began by saying he was delighted to answer our questions and is looking forward to speaking to us individually. He continued by saying, “let us start with fundamentals” - NYS has a Race to the Top agenda.

He presented three challenges:

1. One of the fundamental building stones is what happens between the student and the teacher and what is taught. We look at other countries such as Singapore and Finland, they all have a sequence spiral curriculum. You start with an agreement about what it is to be taught. This is not the case here, because of our diverse population. We have wasted funds by creating many math curriculums that cannot be tested. This is the fundamental problem. Steiner wants to build together a curriculum that actually provides a sequence spiraled curriculum, not lock step, that will encourage teachers to use their ingenuity. Only Louisiana has done this. 95% of the Louisiana schools use it even though it is not compulsory.
2. We are an odd country in that we have created three levels of subjects. We need to treat all subjects equally. We need Regents exams in all subjects. We are in the 21st Century, our curriculum should not be the same as 50 years ago. We should have a course in multi-media technology. We need to think what an educated person needs to know.

3rd Challenge:

Teaching is what holds this whole thing together. We need well-prepared teachers. We are re-thinking teacher preparation. Now, in-service course work consists of course work, a low bar test, a little bit of a dip in the school world and some internship in a school.

Suggested strategy: He did videotaping at Hunter College –watched video of each student along with reviewing the student’s transcript. He discovered there was a lack of correlation between the paper grades and the teaching. It might be that they would be good teachers but not now unless help is given to them. The problem is that the academic knowledge is given, but there is not a lot of academic knowledge about what makes a good teacher.

We need performance-based assessment of new teachers. We should not put teachers in the classroom unless we are assured that they can teach. We have to develop new assessments for new teachers.

We need mentoring-we cannot just drop the new teachers into the classroom. One of the reasons the good charter schools are doing well is because at least one or two master teachers are watching the first year teachers. We need master teachers to be mentor teachers who are paid well to help beginning teachers.

Teacher and principal Evaluation Agreement agreed upon by NYSUT, UFT and SED. 40% based on State tests given to students - student performance, 60% principal evaluation, and peer on peer evaluation. Ratings can be given as follows: “Highly effective,” “effective,” “developing” or “ineffective.” Need to help teacher who needs improvement and if this does not work, through due process terminate the teacher.

National Common Core Standards-Board of Regents will consider them for adoption shortly. Final draft is due out May 15th.

Steiner explained, “We are going to build curriculum to those standards.” He is skeptical that bubble tests can assess student’s knowledge. Bubble tests, he said, cannot assess student’s thinking and performance.

Only about 18 percent of Americans who start 1st grade go on to graduate from college. It is happening because we built a tunnel from two ends with no compass.

We build as system from Primary school upwards and never bother to check what students need in College. There is a mismatch between what is tested in grade school and college. We need people in one subject from elementary, middle, high school, higher ed and we need to map a curriculum.

In NYC: If you score a 3 in Math and English that is a PASS you have a 55% chance of passing the Regents. If you are passing in the 8th grade the message should be you are on track. The 8th grade and the Regents don’t seem to be the same sequence.

The issue is –Is the test a good test?

The issue is not tracks – it is tracks that lead nowhere. We have shut things down for too many students. What is the truth? Only 30% of students in NYS are college material.

What do we think a high school graduate should have in terms of skill sets? Students should have the opportunity to go to college or another choice. What are the routes available that recognizes fields of employment?

Where do we start? We start with Race to the Top because it gives us discretionary funds. It will enable us to give funds to build curriculum models, and schools. SED staff is down to 350 from the 3000 people we need. We need our BOCES, folks in this room to move the agenda forward.

Commissioner feels optimistic. First step is to look in the mirror, that you stay calm, check your information, talk to people who have been in the field, it may look good on paper but it must be real world. We have a terrific challenge-it takes time. Young people are being bombarded by text messages, twitter, video, I-pods. We have an ADHD culture. KIPP School in NYC ran an experiment with a chocolate. If you don’t eat the chocolate until the adult comes in the room you will get two chocolates. There is a correlation between result and school success. Students require perseverance, ability to focus/stay with an assignment.

We need to design productive, outcome-based conversations.

Bruce Weiner-School Psychologists asked “What is your perspective on mental health needs?”

Steiner: Lack of funding will reduce mental health staff. Obama administration is supporting Harkins amendment.

Steiner: We have to re-think what we mean by education.

Suzanne Feldberg , School Library Systems Association of NYS

What will be the assessment for non-tested areas? The Commissioner standards will give us some models/standards.

Steiner: This is for professional associations who know what is involved with these subjects to develop an assessment instrument.

Steiner explained that he was at the National Endowment for the Arts as the Education Director because he believes arts education is critical.

Steiner suggested we ask ourselves, How do I know I am doing a decent job-what is the accountability? He explained, if you can articulate that, you have the assessment. Non-tested area teachers need to decide what does good teaching look like. All the non-tested areas will have an accountability that is based on student achievement.

Laura Bargstedt, NY Association of Continuing/Community Education

Explained that in NYS we have the unfortunate reality of many youth and adults who have not completed high school. Their second chance to enter post-secondary education and training is through the GED. There was the decision to cancel contracts with GED Public Test Sites throughout the State. She asked, "What are your thoughts to extend opportunities to these residents of New York State?"

Steiner explained that tests are being discontinued because SED is broke. Because anyone can take the test we have the highest fail rate in the country. We need an on-line program. For the first time all of the adult ed will be together. Special Ed will be part of P-12.

Jim Viola, SAANYS

Explained that here appears to be a tension between two of the planned reforms:

-The equitable deployment of high quality teachers and leadership across high performing and under-performing classes and schools.

-Basing performance evaluations upon student performance data.

Viola asked, "Do you expect this will have a chilling effect on the receptivity of teachers to accept assignment to lower performing classes, and receptivity of leadership to accept assignment to lower performing school?"

Steiner suggested we look at: What is the distribution of our students? What is the expected gain for those students in that kind of school? He said, "The test may be imperfect but it is not nothing." We need to look at the scores over a period of years. The evaluation of both the teachers and leadership will be based on a growth model. In addition the evaluation would not be based only upon the extent to which students perform at the proficient and advanced levels on state assessments.

Jan Stark, NYS Technology Education Association

Explained that in STEM we believe the "T" is Technology Education and that our current

MST Standard allows for STEM to be taught and should be part of the common core content areas. That being the case, how can STEM be effective with RTTT funds, when a number of Districts are out of compliance and NYC has virtually no Tech Ed programs? What can you and SED do to rectify this?

Steiner advocates a full multi-media technology sequence with a Regents at the end. Eventually, he said, we need longer school days and longer school years. We need to thread technology into all our subjects. We need to have standards so we get serious about the skill levels.

He further explained that the Problem is that existing teachers are techno phobic.

Teachers need access to the tools.

Thinking about technology learning is just beginning.

Steiner asked, "10 years from now do you want an on-line learning system?"

He explained that it was a very individualized learning – something like a new IEP is needed each day. It is a very isolating way of learning. He asked, "Where is our socialization?"

Average child gets 5 ½ hours of instruction a day.

Private School – 8 hours a day.

Arnie Sarotsky, Science Teachers Association of NYS

Science Teachers Association stands ready to help the Commissioner.

All organizations were asked by Grace to send letters in support for Race to the Top.
Please send RTTT Round #2 letters of support to this e-mail box: RTTT@mail.nysed.gov

Nancy Villarreal de Adler, NYS Association of Bilingual Education

Explained that the NYSABE applauds the Commissioner's goals to

1. develop a sequenced, spiral curriculum for the 21st century and
2. to expand the clinical model for the preparation of teachers.

NYSABE urges NYSED to ensure that

1. All bilingual learners have optimum access to the new curriculum which will take into consideration their linguistic and cultural diversity, and
2. All new bilingual teachers have the opportunity to participate in statewide teacher preparation programs that implement the clinical model.

She explained that 11 out of 100 bilingual students who begin college, graduate.

Pat Barbanell, NYS Art Teachers Association

Explained that the crucial point is that you design a curriculum.

We thank you for clarifying the dichotomy between the need to address all content equally and the common core standards initiative that focuses only on two areas – ELA and math. What is the timeline for addressing all the standards areas and how do you plan to work with professional educators (associations) to accomplish that?

Steiner: We will be presenting the common core standards work to the Regents at the beginning of June and will begin contacting groups to get input on the other standard areas including the arts on June 2nd.

Robert Rotunda, NYS School Counselor Association

Asked, "Would the NY State Education Department, consider adapting the National and State standards for the School Counseling Program?"

Steiner: Suggested that Robert send some information to him.

Sue Boddan-Ritty, Reading

Asked, "What process will you pursue to educate the public to communicate new ideas?"

Steiner: We will work with the PTA, visiting different school districts.

Send questions/comments to the Commissioner to

Laura Miller, NYSCEA, SED Liaison Lmiller@mail.nysed.gov

Laura will work with the Commissioner's staff to insure that NYSCEA's questions are addressed. If NYSCEA delegates use the NYSCEADELE Listserv. SED staff will respond in a timely manner.