

The Role of Professional Organizations in Teacher and Leader Effectiveness: An Open Letter to State Education Leaders

To:

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo (D) – Governor, State of New York

Hon. John J. Flanagan (R) – Chair, New York State Senate Standing Committee on Education

Hon. Catherine Nolan (D) – Chair, New York State Assembly Committee on Education

Merryl Tisch – Chancellor, New York State Board of Regents

Elizabeth Berlin – Acting Commissioner, New York State Education Department

Ken Wagner, Senior Deputy Commissioner for Education Policy, New York State Education Department

Angelica Infante-Green – Associate Commissioner for the Office of Bilingual Education & World Languages, New York State Education Department

Candace H. Shyer – Assistant Commissioner for Assessment, Standards and Curriculum, New York State Education Department

April 22, 2015

Dear State Education Leaders,

We write to you in the spirit of partnership as leaders of the two statewide professional associations representing teachers and administrators in the subject areas of the Social Studies and World Languages. As the respective presidents of the New York State Council for the Social Studies (NYSCSS) and the New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYS AFLT), we represent New York public and independent school educators and administrators.

More than any other type of organization, professional associations such as ours are solely organized, managed, and programmed “by educators, for educators.” As such, as we reflect the state-of-the-art in curriculum and assessment development, instructional practice and support, and service to our profession. Our associations’ leadership teams

are keenly aware of current issues and trends in education; understand the continued professional learning needs of our members; and continue to enjoy a strong and productive working relationship with local and state education officials. We are founded on three core tenets of advocacy for our professional practice, rigorous, standards-based learning for our members, and service to our profession.

Based on changes to the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) system included in Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2015, New York State teachers and administrators will be required to complete a minimum of 100 hours of professional development every five years as a condition of re-certification. We request an opportunity to continue our organizations' long-standing partnership with NYSED in helping to support and craft the delineation of professional development requirements for continued teaching and administrative certification. Traditionally, our members have served in advisory capacities to NYSED to inform policy and its implications for effective practice. We believe that professional associations such as ours provide vital and effective professional development for educators, and we would like to advise NYSED on the menu of available options to satisfy current professional development requirements. We share our program offerings in this letter as a way to demonstrate the value and expertise we provide to our state's teachers and administrators. We also believe that no single organization or district provides a complete program of professional development to serve the needs of all educators. Thus, we encourage NYSED to develop a menu of rigorous, standards-based professional development programs from which educators can choose. This menu should include, for example, the program and services of professional associations for teachers and administrators.

Districts and schools accept our programs as evidence of high-quality professional development that satisfies New York State's current 175-hour requirement for professional development every five years (Part 100.2[dd] of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education). Licensed and practicing educators lead the professional development sessions in our organized conferences and institutes. Sharing innovative and emerging practices creates a synergy among educators that enables them to remain highly effective and competitive in their practice. As organizations, we respond to the needs for more on-demand professional learning beyond the scope of the traditional, face-to-face annual conference.

For example, NYSAFLT sponsors:

- an **annual conference offering over 60 different workshops** is regularly attended by over 300 educators – in development, but more information available at <http://conference.nysaftl.org/2015/>;
- **webinars** on topics ranging from technology integration to methodology to the incorporation of Common Core State Standards into instruction and assessment – more information available at <http://www.nysaftl.org/webinars/>;
- an annual **colloquium** focused on issues in the profession and instructional best practices – more information available at <http://www.nysaftl.org/conferences/colloquium/index.shtml>;

- a **summer institute** held at SUNY Oneonta which provides 30 hours of professional development over 4 days – in development, but more information available at <http://www.nysaft.org/conferences/summerinstitute/index.shtml>.
- Various regional conferences that provide locally accessible professional development to educators across the state – more information available at http://www.nysaft.org/regional_conferences.shtml; and
- a **2014-2018 strategic plan** to meet educators' needs – more information is available at <http://www.nysaft.org/strategic.shtml>.

NYS AFLT has continuously worked in tandem with the NYSED to best serve our membership. NYSED liaisons have been our keynote speakers, panel participants and workshop presenters. We joined forces with local foreign language organizations in creating acceptable regional assessments after the elimination of our Regents and Proficiency examinations in world languages. We supported and advised the NYSED on the creation of the Seal of Biliteracy. We adhered to the NYSED regulations when creating our position statements. NYSED has been the sponsor of many of our state-wide events.

Similarly, NYSCSS (in conjunction with its sister organization, the New York State Social Studies Supervisory Association, or NYS4A) sponsors:

- an **annual conference**, which attracted nearly 700 educators in March 2015, and was the first of its kind to embrace an interdisciplinary approach by including planning and sessions by and for the library, staff development, and higher education communities – more information is available at <http://nyscss.org/convention/2015-convention/>;
- a **summer institute**, focused in 2015 on the first roll-out of the New York State K-12 Social Studies Toolkit, a project between Binghamton University and the New York State Education Department – more information is available at <http://nyscss.org/events/institute/>;
- **study tours abroad**, the first of which to China in 2016 will explore Chinese culture and its education system – more information is available at <http://nyscss.org/events/china/>;
- **summits** held at NYSED, resulting in specific actions on curriculum and assessment development; and
- a **2014-2017 strategic plan** to meet educators' needs – more information is available at <http://nyscss.org/nyscss-board-of-directors-approves-2014-2017-strategic-plan/>.

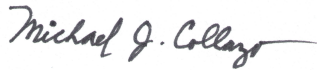
Our associations have a long-standing tradition of collaboration with state education initiatives. For example, NYSCSS and NYS4A members (including several past presidents) are active on the New York State Education Department's Social Studies Content Advisory Panel; serve as item writers and reviewers for the two Regents Examinations in Social Studies; and invite NYSED curriculum and assessment staff as liaisons to our Boards.

We look forward to a continued partnership with NYSED related to the professional development requirements for continued teaching and administrative certification. We are confident that we will be valued partners in the creation of a professional development model that meets the needs of educators in a complex and dynamic education system. Please feel free to contact us to discuss our programs and ideas further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francesco L. Fratto". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the end.

Francesco L. Fratto
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Collazo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the end.

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