



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK /  
ALBANY, NY 12234

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**SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR P-12 EDUCATION**

April 14, 2011

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing with several updates and three important requests.

First, I want to thank you for your partnership in the early implementation of the Regents Reform Agenda and our Race to the Top Initiative. I know that we share a common investment in successfully implementing the reforms established by the Regents and described in our Race to the Top application, as well as a common concern about logistical and capacity questions. I appreciate your investment and creativity around the early implementation of the Common Core State Standards, your partnership in imagining an effective teacher and leader evaluation system, and your commitment to using school-based inquiry to impact our results in schools. The Network Team structure offers a promising vehicle to translate the important goals presented in the Regents Reform Agenda and in Race to the Top.

Second, I want to acknowledge a common concern around the timing of the guidance and information the State is able to provide on the precise details of these efforts. While I share your sense of urgency on this point, it has been important for the State to complete our tasks in a logical order, not getting ahead of the Board of Regents or quality planning.

Third, I would like to invite you to attend an event on April 28, entitled, “Bringing the Common Core to Life.” This is an in-person or webinar session, lasting two hours, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. During the presentation, participants will engage with a leading author and architect of the Common Core State Standards, David Coleman, to understand how the Core Standards for College and Career Readiness build on the work New York State has done in developing a standards-based system. David will discuss New York’s significant role in the development and implementation of the new standards in mathematics and English language arts and literacy. Further, as a result of this session, participants will gain specific insight regarding the impact that these next generation standards will have on individual roles and responsibilities in improving education in our State, namely teachers and instructional leaders. David will also discuss the Core Standards from the perspective of New York State teachers and instructional leaders. He will sketch out the most significant implications the Standards have for instruction and assessment in New York State.

If you plan to participate, we suggest you read the following:

1. The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy Instruction in History/ Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, Introduction - pages 3-8:  
[http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI\\_ELA%20Standards.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf)

2. The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy Instruction in History/ Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, Appendix B - pages 1-13: [http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix\\_B.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf)
3. The Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, Introduction - pages 3-8: [http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI\\_Math%20Standards.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_Math%20Standards.pdf)
4. An excerpt from Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail," pages 1-5: <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf>

Please RSVP before Tuesday, April 26 by sending an email to [rttt@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:rttt@mail.nysed.gov) with the subject "RSVP" and indicate whether you plan to attend via webinar or in person. On the day of the webinar, attendees will find a prominent link to the webinar on our Race to the Top home page at <http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/>.

And finally, I write with **three time sensitive requests**:

**Request #1:** Please forward this email to anyone in your district or network for whom you think it would provide useful information. We are committed to communicating directly with any member of our educator community who wishes to participate.

**Request #2:** Please click on the following link to register for future communications of this nature: <http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/subscribe.html>

**Request #3:** We are aware that many of you have begun to work on aligning your curriculum with the Common Core Standards (NYS P12 CCLS) or already have in place curricula that reflect the key principles embodied in the Common Core. In order to maximize our collective learning, I am asking you to share examples of the best work you have seen in this alignment process. Initially, we are seeking samples of units in subjects where literacy plays a key role (ELA, Social Studies, and Science). Please gather and send the highest quality aligned units, lesson plans, materials, samples of student work, and other classroom artifacts produced by your districts and schools by close of business on May 9, 2011 to: Associate Commissioner Ken Slentz, Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Field Services, Room 875 EBA 89 Washington Avenue, NYS Education Department, Albany, NY 12234.

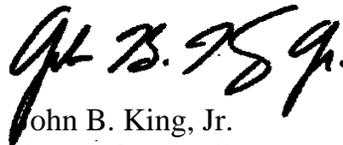
Please note the guidance below when evaluating the materials for Common Core alignment, and include as many of the criteria as possible:

1. Grade level complex text is the subject of the lesson/unit rather than the use of different leveled texts for different students.
2. Lesson/unit focuses on the multiple close readings of texts for understanding.

3. Lesson/unit includes instructional scaffolding to enable students at varying skill levels to access the complex text directly (and the lesson does not preempt or replace the text by translating its contents for students).
4. A series of text-dependent questions are included in the lesson/unit that require students to demonstrate that they follow the details of what is explicitly stated but also asks them to make non-trivial inferences.
5. A focus of the lesson/unit is on building students' ability to use relevant textual evidence to support their explanations and inferences about texts.
6. Extensive writing opportunities are included for students to draw evidence from texts (i.e. write to sources) and to present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information. Regularly they are asked to respond to questions about texts and verify their answers, write notes about texts, summarize texts, etc.
7. When reading, academic vocabulary prevalent in complex texts is taught by drawing students' attention to specific words and working through word meanings in their context.
8. Lesson/unit invites students to share their preparation, evidence, and research orally with their peers.
9. Lesson/unit explicitly and effectively supports student mastery of the key elements of grammar and conventions in the context of reading and writing, including how to put smaller units together to form longer, more complex sentences and paragraphs.
10. Lesson/unit cultivates independence in students.

In continuing to advance the Regents Reform Agenda, I look forward to hearing from you on the items above and working closely with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John B. King, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

John B. King, Jr.

Senior Deputy Commissioner P-12