Student Achievement

It has never been more critical for students to graduate high school College and Career Ready. To secure the long-term success of New York and the country, we need to better ensure that all students are provided a world class education to compete in the 21st Century.

Today, roughly two-thirds of all new jobs require some form of postsecondary education, and seven of the top ten fastest growing occupations require not only some post-secondary education, they actually require a post-secondary degree. Furthermore, according to a recent study by the Rutgers University Center for Workforce Development, only 16 percent of 2009 through 2011 high school graduates have full time jobs, compared to 37 percent for the 2006 through 2008 classes.

The Regents Reform Agenda that is already underway is a direct response to the challenge of graduating all students College and Career Ready by increasing rigor and raising standards, implementing the Common Core Standards (which are new College and Career Readiness standards adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia), and developing a next generation assessment program.

Increased Rigor and Higher Standards

In July 2010, the Board of Regents raised the "cut scores" on English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics exams to more accurately measure proficiency. Over several years, graduation requirements have become more rigorous and general education Local Diplomas have been phased out. Even with these actions to increase standards, graduation rates have steadily increased and stand at 74 percent.

The Regents have established Aspirational Performance Measures to better measure College and Career Readiness. Results on two such measures are reported for all school districts:

- **Advanced Regents Diploma Percentage:** the percentage of students who earned a Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation

- **ELA/Mathematics:** the percentage of students who graduated and earned a 75 or greater on their English Regents examination and an 80 or greater on a math Regents examination.

Using these measures, which are correlated to success in first year college courses, 34.7 percent of students are ready for college and careers.

Although graduation rates are not rising as fast as they should, and achievement gaps are disturbing, particularly with regard to English language learners and Students with Disabilities, there is a solid foundation in New York to improve student outcome as demonstrated by sustained gains in recent years. Even as the focus of the Reform Agenda is centered around the development of more rigorous standards to be met by all students, the Regents have discussed and taken initial actions to strengthen the safety net for Students with Disabilities who, with appropriate accommodations, supports and services, can reach the state's learning standards.

Implementing the Common Core Standards

The development of the Common Core Standards is a nationwide, state-led effort to establish a shared set of clear educational standards for ELA and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects.

The Common Core are the first learning standards to be ***backmapped*** from the skills and knowledge students need to succeed in college and careers grade-by-grade all the way back to kindergarten. To better ensure that students are prepared to compete in the 21st Century, the Common Core are benchmarked to international standards and informed by the best evidence and research.

The Common Core will be implemented in classrooms throughout the state in the 2012-13 school year. The Department is leveraging Race to the Top (RTTT) funds to develop supports and resources to help districts implement the Common Core, including:

- Launching EngageNY.org website with resources for teachers and principals
- Statewide professional development through Network Teams
- Video Exemplars of excellent teaching aligned to the Common Core

In addition to these resources, the Department also issued RFPs for grades P-12 ELA/Mathematics curriculum modules and will issue RFPs in early 2013 for Science, Social Studies and Arts curriculum modules.

Next Generation Assessments

The Department's assessment program is critical to improved teaching and learning.

- Key measure of how students are progressing towards mastery of the New York State Learning Standards
- Critical component of the state's accountability system
- Contributes to our evaluation of teacher and principal effectiveness

The current testing program includes grades 3-8 tests in ELA and Mathematics, grades 4 and 8 science, and multiple Regents examinations at the secondary level. As part of the Regents Reform Agenda that is underway, the Regents have taken multiple actions to transform the assessment program into a sophisticated, rigorous and secure program that continues to improve teaching and learning and drives students to College and Career Readiness.

In addition to the adoption of the Common Core Standards, these actions include:

- **Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC):** In January 2010, the Regents endorsed participation in the federally-funded, 24-state PARCC consortium for the development of a common set of K-12 computer-based assessments in English and Mathematics centered on the skills and knowledge it takes to be ready for college and careers. PARCC assessments are scheduled to be operational in 2014-15, pending final approval by the Regents of the resulting assessments.

- **Alignment of Assessments to the Common Core:** Grades 3-8 tests will be aligned to the Common Core Standards in 2012-13, and Regents English and Mathematics exams will begin to be aligned to the Common Core Standards in 2013-14. After they become aligned to the Common Core Standards, these assessments will become more rigorous and focus on priority knowledge and skills to ensure College and Career Readiness. To inform this process, the Department convened Content Advisory Panels composed of representation from early childhood, ESL and bilingual teachers, general and special education teachers, as well as higher education representatives.

- **Computer-based Testing:** The Department has begun to develop a statewide computer-based testing transition plan to ensure that new technologies are seamlessly integrated into teaching and learning.

- **Test Security Unit:** Following a report by an independent investigator appointed by the Commissioner, the Regents created a Test Security Unit in March 2012 to enhance the security and integrity of the testing process with increased monitoring, training, and measures to prevent test integrity violations.

New Educational Models to Better Ensure College and Career Readiness

In addition to the teaching and learning initiatives being implemented under the Regents Reform Agenda that is already underway, the Regents have proposed legislation to support new educational models to meet the diverse needs of New York's students. Two of these proposals include:

- **Early College High School Programs:** Early College High Schools (ECHS) are innovative partnerships designed to increase student attainment of postsecondary degrees, especially among underrepresented student populations. The Regents have proposed legislation (S.5647 – Flanagan/A.9312 – Nolan) which has passed the State Senate to provide continued resources to ECHS programs through Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) funds to ensure the long-term sustainability of this innovative strategy to increase high school graduation and postsecondary degree completion rates among underrepresented students

- **Regional High Schools:** Many school districts, particularly small, rural districts, are threatened by a decline in educational opportunities and programs for their students. The Regents have proposed legislation (S.7486 – Flanagan) to provide districts the opportunity to work together to establish a regional secondary school to leverage resources to improve educational programming and services for these students

English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities

Though New York's students have continued to make steady progress even as standards and graduation requirements have become more rigorous, disturbing achievement gaps continue to exist, particularly with regard to the performance of our most vulnerable student populations. While the June 2011 calculated College and Career Ready rate (as measured by Aspirational Performance Measures that correlate to success in first-year college courses) for All Students stood at 34.7 percent, the rate for English language learners and Students with Disabilities lagged at 6.5 and 4.4 percent, respectively.

A recent study by The Education Trust – West indicates that great teachers help students who are academically behind catch-up. Because consistent exposure to great teachers is key to College and Career Readiness, many of the proposals and initiatives undertaken by the Regents to implement the Reform Agenda include a focus on developing the tools, resources, and providing the supports and development opportunities necessary for educators to better serve our highest-need students and communities.

These initiatives include

- **Video Exemplars:** The Department issued a RFP for the creation of a high-quality video resource library to serve as a professional development resource for educators. As part of the RFP, the Department sought proposals with a particular focus on educators working in high-need schools and with, among other vulnerable student populations, English language learners and Students with Disabilities.

- **Changes to teacher and principal certification:** The new Educating All Students certification exam takes aim at the achievement gap and will assess whether new teachers and principals understand how to address the learning needs of English language learners, Students with Disabilities, and students from diverse backgrounds.

- **Model Induction:** The Department awarded three RTTT grants to school districts to fund programs that will strengthen and enhance mentoring for new teachers in high-poverty, low-performing schools and those who teach English language learners, Students with Disabilities, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

- **Clinically Rich Graduate Teacher Preparation Pilots:** The Department made 11 awards to institutions from regions throughout the state to provide clinically-based teacher preparation pilots. Through this initiative, it is estimated that over 400 teaching candidates will be prepared in high-need areas, such as English language learners, Students with Disabilities, and STEM fields.

New York has a relatively unique scope of responsibility with regard to English language learners, with approximately 8 percent of the state's public school student population falling into this category. As a result, in addition to the initiatives described above, the Regents have also taken specific actions to better ensure that English language learners graduate College and Career Ready, including:

- **Launching an initiative to align English as a Second Language and Native Language Arts Standards to the Common Core:** As part of this initiative, the Department has formed a Steering Committee to inform the process.

- **Beginning a Review of Part 154 Regulations:** At its December 2011 meeting, the Regents approved a review of regulations governing the education of English language learners to strengthen programs delivery in light of the latest research and data.

- **Approving NYCDOE's Corrective Action Plan:** In October 2011, the Department approved a corrective action plan for NYCDOE (where approximately 70 percent of the

state's English language learners are enrolled) which requires NYCDOE to provide more program options, supports, and services for English language learners and their families.

Parental Engagement

The Regents have long understood that parents and family are critical contributors to improving student achievement. In 2007, following a series of public hearings throughout the state, the Regents adopted a policy statement on Improving Student Achievement and School Performance Through Parent and Family Partnerships.

The Department included a key parental engagement component in the recently released School Innovation Fund RFP. This program, which seeks to award $27 million over 2.5 years, includes a category on community-oriented school design, which is a public school model with an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and family and community engagement. The partnership would be jointly operated through a partnership between the school system and one or more community agencies. These schools, among other components, provide:

- Family resource center and opportunities for parents and families to be involved in the school
- After school and summer enrichment programs that reinforce and extend the academic experience for students and adults
- Social and educational services for families and community members

Parental involvement was also incorporated into the teacher and principal Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluation system. As part of the 60 percent of the evaluation that is based on Other Measures, school districts and bargaining units may choose for a portion of those points to include approved parent and student feedback tools.

The Department's ESEA Waiver, approved by the United States Education Department in May, included an increase from 1 to 2 percent of the setaside for parent involvement and engagement activities.

Furthermore, the Regents have aligned federally-mandated turnaround efforts to principles that include Family and Community Engagement, which means that turnaround efforts must include effective practices to promote family and community engagement.