

December 2013

The Blue Sea Educator

COMMON CORE BASELINE

The NYS Education Department released the results of ELA and Mathematics scores for state assessments. These scores represent the first for New York students measuring the Common Core Learning Standards that were adopted by the State Board of Regents in 2010. The percentage of students deemed “proficient” was significantly lower than in 2011-2012; however NYSED officials characterized the results as creating a “new baseline of student learning .. and largely the result of the shift in the assessments to measure the Common Core Standards, which more accurately reflect students’ progress toward college and career readiness.”

Commissioner John B. King, Jr. said these new results are consistent with other indicators of college and career readiness, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), SAT and PSAT student performance, and college and career ready scores on NYS’s high school Regents exams. The first cohort of students required to pass Common Core-aligned Regents exams for high school graduation will be the class of 2017. Board of Regents Chancellor Merryl H. Tisch and Commissioner King both expressed concern that the learning gap for low income students, African-American and Hispanic students, and English Language Learners remains unacceptable.

Statewide Grade 3-8 Exam Results - Percent Students that Met/Exceeded Proficiency

- All Students Combined: ELA 31% and Math 31%
- ELA by Race/Ethnicity: Black 16% and Hispanic 18%
- English Language Learners: ELA 3% and Math 10%
- Students with Disabilities: ELA 5% and Math 7%

Fall Leadership Summit

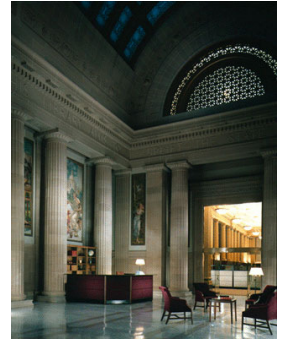
At the NYS Counsel of School Superintendents’ Fall Leadership Summit, Commr. King reported New York’s 4-year high school graduation rate is 74% for all students. However, the percentage graduating college and career ready is significantly lower at 35% for all students. Students graduating with at least a score of 75 on an English Regents, and 80 on a Math Regents correlates with success in first-year college courses. “College and Career Ready Graduation Results” were higher than the 35% overall for all students ... for White (49%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (57%) students, and lower for Black students (13%), Hispanic (16%), American Indian (19%), ELLs (7%), and Students with Disabilities (5%). Commissioner King also reviewed the seven year transition and phase-in to New York Common Core Assessments beginning in 2010 when the Board of Regents adopted the Common Core Standards.

King reported that the roll-out of Common Core Regents exams begins in June 2014 for ELA and Algebra 1, followed by June 2015 (Geometry), and June 2016 (Algebra II).

King presented on additional topics including curriculum, instruction, assessment, and financial investments. A copy of the full presentation is available at www.nysed.gov.

BOARD OF REGENTS RESPONDS TO COMMON CORE COMPLAINTS

The NYS Board of Regents met in November to flesh out proposals to reduce and reform testing in schools, including a plan to shorten Math and English exams. Largely in response to teacher and parent complaints at a series of community forums the department held around the state, the Board indicated the state plans to cut down the amount of time students will spend taking math exams by 20 minutes in all grades, and will also cut the number of questions to relieve concerns about students not being able to finish. Further, the state hopes to obtain a federal waiver to allow students with disabilities who are not already excused from assessments to be tested based on instructional level rather than chronological age.



Critics of these changes, including NYSUT president Richard Iannuzzi, argued that the Board's proposed changes only "superficially acknowledge" teachers' and parents' "mounting anger" over the Common Core and testing. "While we support the recommended changes, there is a tremendous disconnect between the minor adjustments and the clamor by student, parents and educators for meaningful and major course corrections," Iannuzzi said.

COMMON CORE CONTENTIOUS FORUMS

State Education Commissioner John King in recent months has attended several Common Core forums across Long Island, including one in Nassau County and two in Suffolk County. King cancelled a scheduled forum in Garden City, as well as several other forums, after a meeting in Poughkeepsie proved contentious. King stated the gatherings were "not constructive to those taking the time to attend." The PTA, which has sponsored the state-wide forums, agreed the meetings should not go forward in similar divisive situations. Throughout the forums, parents, teachers and administrators have viewed the Common Core rollout with increased antagonism, while state officials view CCSS with the laudable objective of teaching kids to reason, not just memorize to improve success in college and in their careers. Commissioner King stated that he realizes there are many challenges ahead, and much work that needs to be done. There is a meeting scheduled on Long Island on December 9, location to be announced.

'DATA' UPDATE

The state has started to upload student data to inBloom, a nonprofit funded by the Gates Foundation, to collect and analyze students' records. Deputy Education Commissioner Ken Slentz told several hundred educators gathered in Albany for training that the data is needed to track students' needs and to improve instruction. Local officials and parents do not want the data uploaded to a cloud because of privacy concerns. Plans to include students' names and addresses to the already uploaded codes will begin in mid-January 2014.



COMMON CORE ON THE LEGISLATIVE FRONT Recognizing that there are “significant elements” in the transition to Common Core that are problematic Governor Cuomo said he would consider “legislative changes” to address parents’ concerns about the rigorous Common Core standards on which New York schools started testing some students last April. At public forums, parents and teachers have argued that the curriculum is developmentally inappropriate for students and that the state has botched the implementation.

While the Governor acknowledged that the NYS Education Department does not report to the Governor’s office, he stated, “it’s something we’re watching very closely” and that “it’s something that might be the subject of legislative changes next year. But it’s not anything that I control, so we are watching.” Cuomo has largely stayed out of the Common Core controversy in recent months. While certain lawmakers and advocacy groups have even called for Commissioner King’s resignation, Cuomo said that the Commissioner “shouldn’t resign, but it’s not for [Cuomo] to say.”

U.S. FALLS IN WORLDWIDE EDUCATION RANKINGS U.S. high school students have fallen in worldwide rankings in Math, Science and Reading according to results released by federal education officials. In Math, for example, 35 nations ranked better in samples of 15-year-olds. Twenty-nine countries scored lower than the United States. Compared to the last round of testing in 2009, a number of countries have moved past the U.S. , including Ireland, Slovenia, Portugal, Spain and Italy. Student scores among the world’s highest were in three cities in China – Shanghai, Hong Kong and Macau. The test rankings were from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), organized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which is an intergovernmental organization made up of 34 mostly industrialized nations, including the United States.



EDUCATION QUOTE... “To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.” [Theodore Roosevelt](#)

EDUCATION REGULATORY UPDATES

NYS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- **HEALTH & SAFETY PRECAUTIONS for STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES** In response to a young student with autism who tragically wandered from his school building in NYC and remains missing, NYSED issued a field advisory to remind all schools of the importance of ensuring they have school-wide policies and protocols to address, prevent and respond to elopement instances such as in this case. Information on school safety building plan requirements is also provided. For the full text see <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/elopement-healthsafety.htm>
- **SPP INDICATOR # 8 PARENT SURVEY CLARIFICATION** Field advisory provides clarification on how to access an official authorized copy of the parent survey required within the State Performance Plan.
- **RtI WEBINARS** NYSED announced a second strand in a series of free webinars by NYS RtI Technical Assistance Center on various topics. For more information: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/RTI/secondwebinars-TAC.htm>



US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- **COLLEGE ACCESS FINANCIAL AID TOOLKIT** The U.S. Department of Education announced the launch of an online "one-stop shop" aimed at guidance counselors and other advisers, such as staff or volunteers at community-based organizations, who assist students through the process of selecting and financing their higher education. The Financial Aid Toolkit, available at [FinancialAidToolkit.ed.gov](https://www.ed.gov/financialaidtoolkit), consolidates financial aid resources and content into a searchable online database, making it easy for individuals to quickly access the information they need to support their students.

1st ANNUAL LONG ISLAND ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The Long Island Alternative Education Association (LIAEA) convened its first annual conference at Roslyn High School in early October. The agenda included remarks by keynote speaker, Dr. Robert Eichorn from the National Alternative Education Association, as well as breakout sessions covering a variety of topics including engaging young substance abusers, grief and depression, an organic approach to writing for secondary students, and Shakespeare and the iPad! Kudos to Executive Board Members for a successful conference, including President KerriAnn Jannotte-Hinkley (Roslyn Hilltop Academy), V.P. Dr. Brenda Williams (Uniondale Alt. Middle/High School), Secretary Susan Ellinghaus (Meadowbrook Alt. Program at Bellmore Merrick CHSD), and Membership Liaison Dorie Cuilla (Oceanside Public Schools).

LEGAL BRIEFS

U.S. COURT OF APPEALS for the NINTH CIRCUIT RULES IN PARENT PARTICIPATION CASE (*DOUG C v. HAWAII*)

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the ninth circuit issued an important decision about parental participation at CSE meetings. The parent requested a due process hearing against the school district because an IEP meeting was held in his absence at which the student's placement was changed. With the student's annual review deadline approaching, an IEP meeting was scheduled and re-scheduled several times. The LEA indicated it was "difficult to work with the parent" and "frustrating to schedule meetings with him." In response to proposed dates, the parent emailed the LEA that he was sick and unable to attend. The LEA offered to reschedule offering several dates, and the parent responded he could possibly participate but could not guarantee he would recover from his illness in time. The LEA suggested the parent participate by phone or the Internet. The parent explained he wanted to be present at his son's IEP meeting, and did not feel physically well enough to participate meaningfully through any means that day.



In scheduling the meeting, the CSE chair testified he asked 13 people on three separate occasions to change schedules and cancel commitments to schedule the meeting. Therefore, without a firm commitment from the parent for the days proposed, the CSE chair decided to go forward without the parent's participation. The IEP generated at the meeting that included the new placement (a move from a private to public placement) was sent to the parent, with a follow-up IEP meeting scheduled for a later date. The day before the follow up meeting, the parent requested a due process hearing.

Central Issue - The central issue in this case was whether the LEA's efforts to include the parent were sufficient to meet IDEA requirements. The facts described above were mostly undisputed. The LEA's central argument was that it could not accommodate the parent's request to reschedule because of the impending annual IEP deadline. The LEA argued that if the annual review deadline passed without a new IEP, services would "lapse."

The Court rejected this argument because it was premised on the erroneous assumption that the LEA is authorized (let alone required) to cease providing services to a student if his annual review is overdue. The IDEA mandates annual review of a student's IEP. However, the LEA could not cite any authority for the proposition that it cannot provide any services to a student whose annual review is overdue. The Court discussed balancing the two options, i.e., including the parent versus meeting the procedural timeline. The court held that the LEA must make a reasonable determination of which course of action promotes the purposes of the IDEA and is least likely to result in the denial of a FAPE.

Under the circumstances of this case, the Court ruled that the LEA's decision to prioritize strict deadline compliance over parental participation was clearly not reasonable. The LEA also argued that scheduling conflicts of their staff mandated that the meeting be held on a certain date. The Court held that the attendance of the parent "must take priority over other members' attendance ... [and that the CSE Chair] improperly prioritized the schedules of the other members of the team over the attendance of [the parent]."

Further the LEA argued that the follow-up IEP meeting cured the defects of parental absence at the first IEP meeting. The Court ruled otherwise reasoning that 'after-the-fact parental involvement is not enough' because the IDEA contemplates parental involvement in the 'creation process'.

In conclusion, the Court found, as a matter of law, that the failure to include the parent at the IEP meeting violated the procedural requirement of IDEA and invalidated the IEP. Parental involvement in the creation process requires that the LEA include parents in an IEP meeting unless they affirmatively refuse to attend.

CLINICAL CORNER

STUDY SUGGESTS OXYTOCIN IMPROVES BRAIN FUNCTION IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

A single dose of the hormone oxytocin, delivered via nasal spray, has been shown to enhance brain activity while processing social information in children with autism spectrum disorders, Yale School of Medicine researchers report in a new study published in a recent issue of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Researcher Ilanit Gordon stated "we found that brain centers associated with reward and emotion recognition responded more during social tasks when children received oxytocin instead of the placebo. Oxytocin temporarily normalized brain regions responsible for the social deficits in children with autism." Gordon said oxytocin facilitated social attunement, a process that makes the brain regions involved in social behavior and social cognition activate more for social stimuli (such as faces) and activate less for non-social stimuli (such as cars). Gordon added "our results are particularly important considering the urgent need for treatments to target social dysfunction in autism spectrum disorders."



STUDY FINDS HIGH QUALITY PRESCHOOL NARROWS GAP BETWEEN HIGH-RISK KIDS & HIGHER ACHIEVERS

A study conducted by Case Western Reserve University's social work department found that children's readiness in language, math and logic was improved significantly by programs offered at 24 pilot prekindergarten sites. Researchers discovered that children at the lowest achievement levels when the study began made the greatest gains and exceeded expectations, narrowing the gap between at-risk children and higher achievers. The analysis was presented in the *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* article, "Getting Ready for School: Piloting Universal Prekindergarten in an Urban County." The study provides policymakers with valuable preschool information that can benefit children in their communities.



SPECIAL EDUCATION CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across

- 1 Money Machines
 5 Before the SAT?
 9 Academic Score
 14 Poorly behaved child
 15 Singer Horne
 16 East & Hudson in NY
 17 Actress Turner
 18 Possesses legally
 19 Opposite of shuts
 20 Oil & Solar
 22 Fed. Ed. Agency abbrev.
 24 Opposite of NW
 25 Natl. Speech Org.
 27 Alphabet triplet
 28 Indulge too much
 31 Rock Band in 1970s
 33 Tau Epsilon Phi (abbrev.)
 36 Softball tosses
 37 One of the senses
 39 Bull; Spanish
 40 Movie inaugural
 42 Simple preposition
 43 Actress Hathaway
 44 Pig's residence
 45 Ump calls him up
 47 Accused spy Alger _____
 48 Light switch?
 49 Neg. opp.
 50 Collegiate Conference Assn.
 53 Exxon Mobil formerly
 55 Grayish pale yellow
 58 Small lake among mountains
 59 Height, abbrev.
 60 Yes or _____
 62 _____ Jordan Sneakers
 63 Sailboat line

- 65 Keyboard key
 67 Broom

- 69 Seaweed
 70 Yul's "on and on..."
 72 Fishing tool
 73 Edison co-worker
 74 Former AG Janet _____
 75 Fast Planes

Down

- 1 Capable
 2 Carry goods
 3 Horses hair
 4 Celebrity
 5 Cunning plans
 6 Pulling thread
 7 Kind of reviews
 8 Russian news agency
 9 Bride's counterpart
 10 Age
 11 Blvd.
 12 Bear havens
 13 Irish
 21 Lady
 23 Baseball list
 26 Box of chocolates
 28 Therapists for short
 29 Listen to
 30 Doctrine suffix
 32 Water mammals
 33 Musical groupings
 34 White-tailed eagles
 35 Edgar Allans

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- 37 Common purpose group
 38 Eeyore spells his name this way
 39 Nevada lake
 41 The same place, Latin
 46 With a will (legal term)
 48 I didn't do it
 50 Slugger's turn
 51 _____ Place, L.I.LEA
 52 Cliffs
 54 Off opposite
 56 He/she/it laughs, Latin
 57 Russian Mountains
 61 Exclamation
 64 School abbrev.
 66 Barcelona airport code
 68 Taxing agency
 71 Sew homonym

Solution to Puzzle can be found on our website at at <http://blueseaeeducation.com/>

Contact Blue Sea Education at 631-368-BLUE (2583) or by email at info@blueseaeeducation.com

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