



Parent input to NYSED/ Board of Regents learning Summit  
May 7, 2015

Good afternoon. I am Bonnie Russell, president of the NYS Congress of Parents and Teachers or PTA. With me is Rick Longhurst, NYSPTA's Executive Administrator. Also with us to respond to your questions are Catherine Romano, NYS PTA Education Coordinator and Co-chair of the NYS Family Engagement Coalition, Natasha Capers of the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice, Jamaica Miles of the Alliance for Quality Education, Matt Barnum of Educators 4 Excellence (E4E), Lisa Rudley of NYS Allies for Public Education (NYSAPE), and Sam Pirozzolo of the New York City Parents Union. On behalf of NYS PTA, I would like to thank you for the invitation to coordinate input to the NYS Board of Regents as you embark on the task of shaping regulations to implement new educator evaluation statutes included in the 2015-16 state budget. I'd like to briefly describe the process we used to develop the comments that Rick will share with you in a moment.

When we received the invitation from Sr. Deputy Commissioner Ken Wagner on April 23<sup>rd</sup> to coordinate parent input, we initially reached out to eighteen organizations that represent interests of public school parents throughout the state and conducted a brief survey of our PTA members. We shared questions that had been posed to us by Sr. Deputy Wagner and asked each group to respond with their positions and suggestions. We then looked for areas of commonality and difference and invited each group to join us in a face to face discussion before finalizing our comments. We found the task to be both interesting and challenging with far more that unites than divides us. We found that what parents seek is relatively simple.

We want instruction that challenges our children while encouraging them to creatively apply what they learn

We seek an environment where educators can collaborate with parents, communities and each other to prepare our students to lead rich and productive 21<sup>st</sup> Century lives

We look for fair, unbiased and reliable information to determine the effectiveness of our schools, the efforts of staff, and the performance of our students

We look to the Board of Regents to lead the dialogue when initiating policy and reform, and to advocate for the services and resources that will make those reforms reality

Of those who replied to our invitation, we discovered that we basically agree in our support of student and educator assessment, however most are uncomfortable with what currently exists. We are not opposed to student testing but we demand good, fair tests that support education of the whole child, suggest meaningful instructional strategies, and drive resources rather than pointing fingers and assessing blame. We also found that where we disagree, that disagreement centers around two themes:

1. Our organizations have different purposes and operate in different ways.
2. For some, the priority is reform urgency as the essential path out of poverty. For others, the reason for urgency is recognized but, it is more important to get the reform right.

Rick will describe details of our commonalities and differences in response to questions posed to us by the department. He will then invite you to pose questions that we in turn may refer to the individual parent group representatives best able to respond.

Good afternoon.

Assessing student growth on optional performance measures and assessments of student learning objectives (SLOs) on the other hand are problematic. Where optional alternate performance and SLO measures are used, we must assume that there is a local rationale that such measures provide more useful information than the primary

Alternate Views:

- a. NYS PTA: SLOs are best determined locally, based on district and school goals. PTA

all favor an implementation strategy that uses several observations where the observer is focusing on a limited number of instructional qualities at one time. Observation should be broadly defined to include qualities observable in the classroom as well as others described in the NYS teaching standards which cannot be. Danielson and NYSUT rubrics both reflect this and are widely used. These rubrics make allowance for parent input and student portfolios, an essential aspect of overall evaluation but that the statute prohibits outside of approved rubrics. We recommend the legislature remove the ban on student and family input.

Alternate views:

- a. NYS PTA: A productive rubric cannot be one size fits all. Classroom instructional practice must also be aligned with building and district goals. Effective instruction demands effective performance on certain qualities that apply to all teachers but others that focus specifically on the environment and priorities of a particular district, school or classroom.

7. Alignment of the Principal Evaluation System to the New Teacher Evaluation System Established in Education Law S30112-d: Principals should be held accountable for student growth performance, overall building performance, a review of teacher growth based on observation, and professional characteristics.

Alternate views:

NYS PTA: Asks, where will parent outreach and family engagement in student success principles/standards be reflected in Principal evaluation? Research indicates strong family engagement and school support is tied to student success, how will these principles of high aspiration and collaboration with parents and the community be reflected in both evaluations?

8. Parameters of Potential Waivers from the General Prohibition Against Assigning a Student to a Teacher Rated Ineffective for Two Consecutive Schools Years: Ideally, there should be no waivers that permit a student to be assigned to an ineffective teacher two years in a row. There are however, times where this may be unavoidable particularly in rural areas where small student populations make alternatives unattractive or impossible. Where waivers are granted, and of necessity, a strong professional development requirement should accompany that waiver.

Alternate views:

Students First NY: SED should act with urgency to require that districts implement their evaluation systems within the time frames prescribed in the state budget. Waivers should only be granted in extraordinary circumstances.

9. The Extent to Which Provisions in Education Law S3012-c Should Apply to the New Evaluation System: Constant change is typically disruptive to the educational process. Aspects of 3012-c that are not addressed in 3012-d should be generally be maintained in their present form, subject to local control.

Alternate views:

NYS PTA: Flexibility in applying student performance to teachers must be required when teachers have inconsistent service or change grade level or schools.

10. Other Relevant Comments and Recommendations: Some among us believe that reform urgency requires immediate implementation. Recent events have led to strong mistrust of the current 3-8 testing system. Parents, teachers and the general public question the reliability and composition of student growth measures, the process used to set cut scores, delayed and incomplete return of test results, and the appropriateness of the test instrument, especially where test questions are inaccessible to principals, teachers and parents. Most believe that the