

The Next Stage of Reform: Outline of a P-16 Strategy

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[A vision for education in New York](#)

The Regents envision a New York in which all people are prepared for citizenship, work and continued learning throughout their lives. They envision a New York in which gaps in achievement have closed, and the overall level of knowledge and skill among the people matches or exceeds the best in the world. In spite of progress over the last decade, we are far from achieving that vision. And the Board understands that the vision is dynamic because policy leaders, educators, and other people around the globe are moving as fast as they can to achieve their own version of the same vision.

The Board further defined that vision at the USNY Summit in November, which produced these aims:

1. Every child will get a good start.
2. Every child will read by the second grade.
3. Everyone will complete middle school ready for high school.
4. Everyone will graduate from high school ready for work, higher education, and citizenship.
5. People who begin higher education will complete their programs.
6. People of all ages who seek more knowledge and skill will have the fullest opportunity to continue their education.

Accomplishing each of these aims requires unprecedented collaboration among parents, employers, elected leaders and educators. Education is a system in which all the parts affect and depend on the others. Therefore, solutions to its problems will have to be systemic solutions. For example, the first aim requires prenatal care, child health care, family literacy through libraries and other institutions, pre-school programs and full-day kindergarten. And we have to start early and keep intervening. Students who do not get a good start are unlikely to read by the second grade. Students who do not become proficient readers won't graduate from high school. Students who enter college with weak mathematics and literacy skills won't graduate.

We also documented the educational challenges facing New York at the Summit and adopted our goals to confront them:

- Close the great divide in achievement along lines of income, race and ethnicity, language, and disability.
- Keep up with growing demands for still more knowledge and skill in the face of increasing competition in a changing global economy.

[The next phase of the reform](#)

The Regents reviewed a summary of the challenges at the Summit and later. This appears in Appendix A. Throughout the year, the Regents have discussed this next stage in reform, both as a Board and with other leaders statewide, and have examined new data to define the problem more precisely. In July at their annual policy retreat, they called for a draft outlining this next phase. In the words of Chancellor Bennett, it must be “big, dramatic and innovative, take

advantage of New York's unique structure, and address inequities." The Regents also said this should conform to the priorities in their 24-month policy calendar and the performance agreement with the Commissioner.

How this report is organized

This report represents a synthesis of the Regents conclusions. Its purpose: to describe the next stage of the reform, outlining the strategy in broad strokes and concrete actions the Regents can take to resolve the problems.

Strategies appear first, then actions. The actions are organized in four sections:

1. First around what particular groups of children and students need.
2. The next section describes elements of standards based reform that must be improved and kept in alignment with one another: learning standards, curriculum, assessments, teaching and instruction, and accountability.
3. Following that is a section on other essential systems, including state aid, technology, and health and mental health partnerships.
4. The paper concludes with a section on organizing for the work. Here we discuss actions to strengthen USNY, regional units, and the State Education Department.

It is of course not possible to undertake all the actions. The Board knows that staff capacity is finite. However, once the Regents have again reviewed the proposed strategies and actions and set priorities, we can create a more detailed plan with a timeline.

What are our strategies?

- We will confront the data, share it broadly, and use it to define as precisely as possible where resources and energy should be applied. We will recognize the achievements and also declare the problems as clearly as we can.
- We will engage everyone by listening to the people the education system is supposed to serve, to the educators at every level, to the employers, and to elected officials who must weigh enormous competing demands for scarce resources. In particular, we will engage students and their parents, and the wider community because educational institutions do not belong to the educators but to the people.
- We will define measurable objectives so that others can hold us accountable, and we can hold education leaders accountable for improving results.
- We will study the practices of high performing education systems, states and nations, and adapt the best to New York's situation. We will try to learn what actions are most effective, and summon others to learn with us.

- We will take action with an awareness that improvement comes from systemic change. We know, for example, that closing the achievement gap for students requires correcting the unequal distribution of teaching talent. And we know that in demanding change in educational institutions to achieve better results, we must also build capacity in our own State Education Department to take on its part of this improvement strategy.
- We will continually renew the alignment of our actions to ensure coherence and effectiveness. For example, academic standards, curriculum, assessment, and instructional practice have to be aligned to be effective. When one element changes, all must change to keep the system effective.
- We will strengthen USNY, because it has great potential to build more effective transitions for students from one level of the system to the next.
- We will advocate for financial resources and legislative actions that will help achieve better educational outcomes. And we will be accountable for the effective use of those resources.

What concrete actions can the Regents take to deal with the causes and resolve the problems?

Educational achievement is about people in the first instance, not institutions. Consider, for example, the revealing conversations the Regents had with students and their parents in Syracuse. Consider also the aims we defined at the Summit, which describe what people want and need – a good start for their children, reading at an early level, a successful middle school experience, graduation from high school, graduation from college, a good job, and readiness for citizenship.

When we do think about institutions, it should be from a USNY perspective because people need the whole system to work, not just an isolated elementary school, library or college. In fact, these institutions *cannot* work without the related parts. The continuing need for remedial courses in college illustrates this point. That is, a college may not fully accomplish its mission because the schools upstream did not accomplish their missions. USNY could become a spectacular advantage for New York, because no other state has all the educational and cultural education institutions in one system under the care of a single board. As a result, we can create and implement policy *systemically*.

Now is the time to act

The Regents have a history of taking vigorous action throughout the entire scope of their responsibility for education and culture. Education policy leaders everywhere strive to do that also, and that raises the bar for everyone. In addition, we have new data that continue to sharpen our understanding of remaining problems. Now is the time for the Regents to again chart the course ahead in education.

Actions we will take

I. Intervention to help children and students¹

Young children

- Advocate for increased multi-year investment in Pre-K that includes greater opportunities for integration of students with disabilities into general education Pre-K programs. Define a workable phase-in strategy.
- Advocate for lowering compulsory attendance age from six to five, with a simple exception process for parents who wish to delay their child's entry into school.
- Define the relationships between school districts and community organizations that provide Pre-K. Pre-K in New York will continue to depend on a network of many providers. The transition from pre-K to kindergarten must be as trouble-free as possible for both children and parents.
- With other agencies, communicate with young families about what they can do to help their children learn well before Pre-K. Public broadcasting can get essential information and parenting strategies to new parents.
- Expand family and early childhood literacy programs in public libraries and museums throughout the state.

Early readers

- Make proven, scientifically-based reading strategies available to all schools and teachers, based on the concepts developed through New York's Reading First grant. The purpose is to enable all (not just young) children to have effective reading instruction. These programs could be offered through BOCES, other regional units, libraries, and higher education.
- Advocate for state funding. Encourage schools to use their own funds. IDEA allows school districts to reserve up to 15 percent of their federal IDEA funds to pay for "early intervening services" and therefore eliminate inappropriate referrals to special education.

¹ Specific actions to increase the number of highly qualified teachers for young children and all students are consolidated in a later section on Teaching and Instruction.

- Expand the Statewide Summer Reading Program and promote it widely to schools and preschools statewide. Establish an “After School Reading Program” that builds on the summer program.

Children with disabilities

- Track performance and compliance data for all school districts.
- Set annual State targets for improvement in important outcomes for students with disabilities.
- Issue public reports on State and individual school district performance in relation to the State targets.
- Use performance data on graduation and drop-out rates and performance on State assessments to identify school districts with the poorest performance for assistance or intervention.
- Review the instructional practices of school districts with the lowest performance to identify the issues that cause poor student performance and help schools to identify specific improvements.
- Direct VESID’s resources, such as Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) professional development specialists, to guide school improvement in areas relating to instruction, such as literacy, behavioral supports and services and delivery of special education services.
- Identify successful schools and districts and help replicate effective practices.
- Direct school districts to spend IDEA funds on specific improvements when performance data is significantly below the State targets.
- Identify specific interventions for New York City.
- Reduce out-of-State placements for the most severely disabled students by increasing in-State capacity.

English language learners

- Publish data on ELL achievement by school and hold schools accountable.
- Increase monitoring to ensure students are receiving all required time and services in English and native language instruction. Publish monitoring reports. Direct improvements in low performing, non-complying school districts.
- Create a “community of practice” among school district leaders and teachers with the great majority of ELLs, share best practice, and require professional development on effective ELL practice to be included in corrective action by low performing schools.
- Provide resources for libraries and public television to support English language literacy and provide after-school programs for ELL students and their parents.
- Seek advice from the Committee of Practitioners in the field of bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL) on strategies to close the achievement gap for English language learners.

- Provide more information to parents about bilingual and ESL programs that can improve their own levels of reading, writing and speaking English.

Students in high school

- Set a State standard for graduation rates and specify a schedule of improvement targets for schools to close the gap between their graduation rate and the State standard.
- Set a State standard for average daily attendance and specify the target for schools to decrease the gap between their annual attendance rate and the State standard.
- Define consequences for schools that fail to meet graduation rate and attendance targets.
- Publish four and five-year graduation rates by school.
- Review effectiveness of Academic Intervention Services for improved academic results and adjust as needed.
- Evaluate Supplemental Educational Services, and remove from the approved list the programs that are ineffectual.
- Align the Regents and Big Five strategies for improving high school graduation. The aim is to ensure coherence and the multiplying effect of all parties pushing in a common direction.
- For high schools with four-year graduation rates below 70 percent, increase the instructional time from 180 to 200 days. Monitor high schools to ensure that all students receive the minimum 5.5 hours of instructional time. Create a Regents panel to advise the Board on whether or not 5.5 hours is sufficient and appropriately used.
- Listen to students, using focus groups and other means, about what's needed to maximize learning for high school graduation and preparation for college, the workforce, and citizenship.
- Expand approved career and technical education programs and double enrollment, especially in the Big five school districts.

Students in post-secondary education

- Implement the strategies that the four higher education sectors (the City University of New York, the State University of New York, independent colleges, and proprietary colleges) and the Regents committed to in the Statewide Plan for Higher Education. These are designed to maximize the success of all college students.
- Report college persistence and graduation data to drive improvements in retention and college completion rates.
- Increase investment in programs that focus academic support and other resources on under-represented students to help them succeed in college, transfer between colleges, and improve graduation rates. For example, research has identified instructional practices in required introductory classes that actually lower graduation rates. Some colleges have used

- these findings to change their practice and secured dramatic gains in graduation rates.²
- Expand P-16 relationships between low performing school systems and higher education to improve practice and results.
 - Create a planning group to connect the K-12 and higher education data systems wherever possible.
 - Engage colleges and the professions in renewal of the learning standards and assessments.
 - Increase information available to students in early years about requirements for college and careers. For example, “Plant the Seed” is a new proposal to encourage middle and high school students living in underserved communities to take rigorous courses, graduate high school, and attend college, later going on to teaching and the professions.
 - Advocate for increased federal and state funding for higher education to make college more affordable for middle and low-income students and their families.
 - Promote innovative practices that improve graduation results, for example, programs such as the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (C-STEP) and Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP).
 - Expand the SED risk analysis to identify higher education institutions with significant performance and financial problems.

Adult Education

- Redesign adult education with a focus on accountability, regional collaboration, access for special populations, new approaches for family literacy, and staff development.
- Expand and improve partnerships among adult education, vocational rehabilitation, higher education and business and industry to ensure that New York’s workforce development system provides full opportunity to gain skill and knowledge, which will improve economic growth and a rising standard of living.
- Create literacy zones to raise literacy and English language proficiency in high-need urban neighborhoods. Expand access to distance learning in these neighborhoods and across the State to reach parents and community members.

Incarcerated Youth

- Advocate for legislation to change the funding mechanism for the incarcerated youth education programs (county jails) that would result in more consistent program planning and better use of funds.
- Ensure the individual student data system tracks the educational progress of incarcerated youth through the various systems in which they are placed.

² Carol A. Twigg, *Increasing Success for Underserved Students: Redesigning Introductory Courses*. Saratoga Springs, N.Y.: National Center for Academic Transformation, 2005.

- Visit selected programs and partner with other agencies to resolve problems concerning the provision of special education services to incarcerated youth, education record transfers, recruitment of certified staff, the range of services available, and the provision of services consistent with a student's IEP.

Students in persistently dangerous schools

- Publish violent and disruptive incident data for all schools. Identify schools that are persistently dangerous, so that parents can exercise their right to choice. Publish a watch list of schools that are close to the criteria for identification as persistently dangerous.
- Audit schools to ensure the accuracy of violent and disruptive incident data. Continually add to the list of persistently dangerous schools and the watch list as needed.
- Respond vigorously to incidents of willful underreporting of violent incident data.
- Require and publish incident reduction plans for persistently dangerous schools.
- Promote promising practices for improving school safety.

//. Standards based reform fundamentals

Renew and raise the learning standards

- Periodic review is necessary to raise the standards to meet requirements for higher education, employment, and citizenship. It is also an appropriate response to the actions of global competitors, many of whom already demonstrate higher achievement than the U.S. on international assessments and are nevertheless raising their own standards. Other states are renewing their learning standards also.
- Direct the Commissioner to propose a schedule and process for the periodic renewal of the student learning standards. Appoint an expert panel of practitioners and scholars to conduct the review. The schedule will provide for no more than two subjects to be reviewed simultaneously, and will assume an 18 month cycle. The basic approach will be that developed for mathematics. The review will include benchmarking the standards of other states and nations and identifying implications for curriculum and assessments.
- Require a fourth year of high school mathematics.

Create and update curriculum guidance

- Based on the learning standards, prepare a grade-by-grade core curriculum, again with the advice of an expert panel. The core curriculum will reflect the best practice nationally and internationally.

Revise the assessments in line with the renewed standards

- Consistent with the above cycles for renewing the standards and curriculum, direct the Commissioner also to revise the assessments.

Strengthen teaching and instruction

- Report the percentage of low income and minority students, as compared to other students, who are assigned unqualified, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers in core courses.³
- Require all teachers in core academic subjects to be highly qualified in the subject they are teaching by July 2007.
- Define actions to resolve the inequitable distribution of teaching talent. In general, the strategy will be to define, reduce, then eliminate the inequitable distribution of teaching talent. The Regents and Department would do this by defining measurable objectives, publishing the data to build public awareness, regulating to require local action to meet the objectives, establishing in regulations a prohibition of inequitable distribution of teaching talent, and fostering new alternate teacher programs in subjects and locations where they are needed.
- Create regional P-16 consortia of schools, colleges and other USNY partners to plan and act together, using up-to-date teacher workforce supply and demand data statewide. Publish new teacher supply and demand data annually.
- Prohibit the assignment of more than a small fixed percentage of novice teachers to Schools Under Registration Review and Schools in Need of Improvement.
- Advocate for legislation to permit recently retired teachers in shortage subjects and locations to return to the classroom without pension penalties.
- Ensure that professional development, as required in regulation, is included as part of a district's Comprehensive Education Plan and that the contribution of professional development to student learning is reported to the Board of Education and district residents each year.
- Monitor and enforce the 175-hour requirement to focus professional development on promising instructional practices related to improving student achievement. The 175 hours should not take place during the minimum instructional time required for students. The intent is to align standards, curriculum, assessment, and instructional practice. Direct the Commissioner to establish expert panels to identify and define promising instructional practices for this purpose. The Regents would adopt promising instructional practices as the core of required professional development. These practices would include those related to reading and the instruction of English Language Learners, special education students, and at-risk students in middle and high school. For example, for at-risk youth, these practices are likely to include 8th to 9th grade transition programs, data systems to identify early the students at risk of not

³ The Education Trust, "*Missing the Mark: An Education Trust Analysis of Teacher-Equity Plans.*" Washington, DC: The Education Trust, August, 2006.

- graduating, high school literacy programs, and practices to improve attendance through improved data and also through instructional programs designed to hold student interest.
- Incorporate the effective practices identified above in teacher education programs. Evaluate and require changes as needed.
 - Monitor the quality of professional development offered by BOCES, Teacher Centers, higher education institutions, and other organizations.
 - Reduce the number of distinct teaching credentials to improve flexibility in staffing and teacher preparation.
 - Examine teacher reciprocity among states to remove any barriers for qualified teachers from other States to secure employment in New York schools.
 - Expand IBM's Transition to Teaching program into the larger business community statewide.

Ensure alignment

- Require an annual report to the Regents, validated by external experts and subject to public comment, on the alignment of each new set of standards, curriculum, assessments, and instructional practices.

Accountability

- Create a State Education Department capacity to audit school data on student achievement, finance, staffing, violent incidents, and other essential information about performance. Advocate for 99 additional SED positions, including 70 positions in auditing, data systems, and school improvement. Report all audit results.
- Set measurable performance targets for achievement, attendance, and graduation rates. Report results.
- Require an annual, consolidated plan for the expenditure of state, federal, and local funds from New York City, the Big Four Cities, and from all districts designated low performing. State funding would be contingent upon Commissioner's approval of the plan. This plan would be recommended but not required for all other school districts. The Commissioner will consult practitioners and school reform experts, and then provide guidance on a plan format that is concise, understandable to the public, and easily monitored for results. These plans will be available electronically to the public.
- Create a peer review capacity to evaluate and report publicly on the quality of the required plans.
- Advocate for legislation to consolidate and reduce planning and reporting requirements now in statute.
- Create electronic means for the public to see student achievement, finance, staffing, violent incident, and other data in a readily understandable format.

- Create early warning systems to enable educators, boards, and the general public to anticipate impending financial problems in school districts.
- Expand the number of schools assigned to the SURR process by lowering the threshold for selection. (That is, by raising the standards.)
- Consolidate the various NCLB, SURR and other state accountability categories into an easily understood three level structure of progressively assertive intervention and sanctions based on district performance.
- Establish a unified grants management system within SED and request annual audits from the Comptroller.
- The Commissioner will establish a financial best practices council, which will promote self-study protocols to strengthen local oversight of finances and operations.
- Strengthen higher education quality by continuing SED's risk analysis approach to quality assurance in colleges and universities. The Department focuses on those institutions where students could potentially be at risk.

III. Other essential systems

Match state aid to the need

- Recommend and advocate for the Regents Foundation state aid proposal.

Technology for learning

- Adopt a vision for using technology to raise achievement and close the gaps, with advice from the USNY Technology Council.
- Adopt policy on technology, again with advice from the Council, which is expected in a preliminary report in June 2007, and a final report in November 2007. Build the 2007-08 budget proposal with this in mind.

Expand health and mental health collaborations with schools

- Assemble an interagency school health and mental health council to advise the Regents on research-based indicators of child health and mental health.
- Identify schools whose children have poor outcomes on standard health and mental health indicators.
- Create a vision and a leadership framework for an integrated education, health, and mental health collaboration to enable teaching and learning in high needs schools and communities.
- Promote strategies found to be promising in resolving high incident health and mental health problems among school age children.
- Advocate for funding to promote local interagency collaboration. These funds would be distributed as small grants to promote collaborative strategies and structures to carry them out.

IV. How will we organize for the work ahead?

Strengthen USNY and focus that strength on the P-16 strategy

- Create a P–16 Council, which will meet semi-annually to advise the Regents and the Commissioner on the coherence of the education system from early through post-secondary education. The Council's charge will be to promote dramatically improved outcomes. The Council will identify points of discontinuity, places where transition between parts of the system can be improved, and actions to improve achievement. The Council will include distinguished leaders from USNY institutions and representatives of the public.
- Advocate for resources for USNY institutions.
- The Regents will meet with USNY leaders in the late Fall to consider follow-through on the commitments made at the November 2005 Education Summit, to further develop this P-16 strategy and build commitment to its accomplishment.

Focus the regional units on a coherent reform strategy

- Adopt a Regents policy on regional education networks to promote joint action on a P-16 strategy to improve results. While the various networks have different missions and funding sources that in many cases limit how their resources can be applied, there is potential for collaboration on a P-16 improvement agenda. The policy would lead to a memorandum of understanding on how networks will be part of a coordinated P-16 strategy. This would greatly expand the resources available to implement P-16 reform. There are many regional networks, including: BOCES, Teacher Resource and Computer Training Centers, Public School Library Systems, Public Library Systems, Licensed Professions Boards, Regional School Support Centers, Regional Adult Education Networks, Special Education Training and Resource Centers, Regional Transition Coordination Sites, Bilingual/ESL Technical Assistance Centers, Early Childhood Direction Centers, Public Broadcasting, State Reading Resource Center, Statewide Resource Center in Mathematics, Statewide Career Technical Education Resource Center, State Center for School Safety, and Statewide School Health Services Center.
- Establish guiding principles and a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of the regional education networks in helping to close the achievement gap.

Transform the work of SED to support the vision

- Communicate the need for changing the SED organization. Speak about purpose, service and vision to all SED staff. Ask staff for ideas on actions that will meet that vision.
- Implement strategies that maximize capacity to carry out the Regents priorities and other essential work. These strategies include: prioritizing and filling key vacancies; redeploying staff where there is flexibility;

identifying inefficiencies, duplication and non-essential work; identifying new skills, titles, and competencies needed; advocating for additional staff to fill critical needs; training staff and expanding professional development; and building new technology solutions.

- Advocate for an increased general fund share of SED's operational budget, including funding for 99 additional staff to fill critical needs.
- Engage the customers directly, early and often.
- Evaluate SED's 10 core functions and, with the help of staff doing that work, redesign the core functions for efficiency and effectiveness, with customer expectations of quality in mind.
- Share best practices and continue to form teams to build bridges across the Department.
- Engage the expertise of the District Superintendents and all regional leaders in pursuit of improved educational outcomes at every level.

In doing this organizational work, the intent is for the State Education Department to become a learning organization that builds its own skill and capacity through personal mastery, shared vision, discussion about practice, and systems thinking.⁴

⁴ Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline; The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. Doubleday: New York, 2006. Page xiii.