POSITION PAPER

BOARD OF REGENTS AND REGULATORY POSITION STATEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

New York State public schools have been engaged in a challenging journey to raise academic achievement for all students.

- Responsibility for governance and policy in this effort is shared by:
  - The State and Federal Governments
  - The Board of Regents
  - The Local Board of Education
- Student success requires a relationship of trust and cooperation between and among these partners

Members of the Four County School Boards Association believe the Board of Regents role is to:

- Establish and hold local school boards accountable for meaningful, challenging, and attainable standards for student progress
- Determine how that achievement will be fairly assessed
- Trust local school district leadership to identify the best methods for meeting or exceeding these standards
- Intervene only when local school district leadership falls short

Primary responsibility for educating New York's children is vested in local school board members who are:

- Elected by their communities as stewards for the education of their children
- Vested with authority only as a corporate body
- Required to conduct their business in public
- Responsible for
  - Exercising the necessary oversight to ensure that each and every child entrusted to their care has the opportunity to reach, and even exceed, the standards
  - Establishing policy
  - Protecting district assets

School Board Members face many challenges in determining how best to meet the varying needs of their students and improve achievement for all:

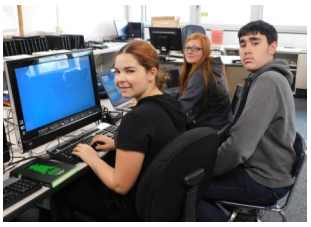
- Increasing costs (ERS, TRS, ESSA, Special Education, Common Core)
- Declining resources (state aid freezes/cuts)
- Tax Cap
- Staffing and labor issues
- Numerous state and federal mandates that limit their local authority and choice
- Changing student, family and community demographics

This is a formidable responsibility, undertaken with great care and deliberation by the members of the Four County School Boards Association. In that spirit, to support the partnership and the understanding of shared concerns, we respectfully offer the following recommendations to the NYS Board of Regents:

EDUCATION P - 16

While Four County members accept their responsibility for the education of students from pre-kindergarten through high school graduation, we are also concerned with the transitions into pre-kindergarten and on to post-secondary endeavors. For us to be successful, we urge the Regents to:

- Ensure that all students are college and career ready, by adopting a systemic P-16 approach to education reform that includes implementation of the Common Core and NYSED Standards
- Support implementation of the Common Core by
  - o Building universal understanding
  - o Advocating for funding to support the necessary staff development o Continued review and refinement of the State's approach to testing
- Establish a state-wide system of student assessment that: o Supports high quality teaching and learning
  - o Provides consistently reliable, valid and developmentally appropriate assessments with timely, accurate results that generate useful diagnostic information for teachers
  - o Offers a variety of methods for measuring student achievement
  - o Allows for flexibility in testing that includes provision for component retesting and "testing-on-demand" to accommodate students who show readiness at different times
  - o Includes the ability to monitor each student's individual annual achievement, isolate the primary reasons for progress or lack of progress, and predict an expected level of growth. This would provide a truer measure of progress than measuring group proficiency or cohort-to cohort comparisons
  - o Is reasonable in number, time requirement, and not duplicative
  - o Takes into account technology requirements to fully support on-line testing in every school
  - o Provides appropriate test modifications for special education students
- Advocate for state funding for the full cost of writing and scoring State required exams
- Eliminate mandatory "stand-alone" field testing
- Facilitate the development of public school virtual courses and support the use of blended and digital learning to expand opportunities for children across the state
- Preserve and expand academic opportunities by:
  - o Allowing students to take college courses for high school credit
  - o Expanding opportunities for a combined Regents' Diploma and Associates Degree
- Allow districts the ability to use demonstrated competence vs. seat-time for course credit and/or graduation requirements
- Support early childhood education programs with:
  - o A comprehensive, developmental (not age driven) approach that preserves access to kindergarten while increasing opportunity for Pre-K.
  - o Advocacy for consolidated, full funding for Universal Pre-K
- Provide regulatory relief for school districts experiencing an influx of unaccompanied minors or other unexpected increases in enrollment



STATE AID

The New York State Constitution guarantees every child in the State the opportunity for a "sound basic education". Financial aid from the state is intended to assure that this is true for every child, no matter the wealth of a community. The Foundation Aid Formula, patterned after previous Regents' proposals, moved toward a fairer and more equitable distribution of state aid funds. Legislative "tinkering" removed that fairness and penalizes poorer, more state-aid-dependent districts, putting them in greater jeopardy of educational insolvency. The impact of this inequity has been recognized as a moral di- lemma. Available funds must be distributed equitably. We urge the Regents to continue to support and advocate for a more equitable distribution of aid including:

- A formula that is equitable, sufficient, timely and accounts for both poverty and fiscal capacity
- Funding for all state generated mandates that drain resources and do not recognize differing student needs across the state.

STRENGTHENING THE PARTNERSHIP

Thank you to the Commissioner and the Board of Regents for their recognition of the need to work together with local Boards of Education to develop a shared understanding of state standards and local challenges in the effort to improve the quality of education in New York State. The Commissioner's Round-Table and the Commissioner's availability to meet with school board groups around the state has increased communication between and among the partners. To further enhance shared understanding we urge the Regents to:

- Continue working with school board members and educational professionals as valued partners in the decision making process
- Continue to improve the communication process for timely and meaningful input from your partners prior to making policy decisions that impact local school districts.
- Participate in regular, planned meetings between members of the Board of Regents and representatives from the state and local school boards associations
- Support and encourage the creation of a Commissioner's Advisory Council of School Board Members that includes representation from the Board of Regents. To provide continuity, the Council's composition should be similar to that for superintendents and NYSUT, with annually appointed representatives from all state and regional school board organizations either in place of or in addition to the current Round-Table format with the continually changing group of school board members
- Continue to provide open forums, with widely publicized, timely notification, that seek all viewpoints when key issues are being considered
- Re-establish the Chancellor's Advisory Council of School Board Members with similar composition to the Commissioner's Advisory Council and the inclusion of the Vice Chancellor

CONSISTENT AND ACCURATE COMMUNICATION

Reliable information from the State Education Department provides critical guidance to school districts in their efforts to comply with regulation and to seek direction. We applaud Commissioner Elia and Chancellor Rosa for their travels around the state to meet with any and all stakeholder groups in the effort to communicate information to all in the field. This has not always occurred. To continue those efforts, we ask the Regents to:

- Maintain a protocol for clear, concise and timely two-way communication between SED and local school boards
- Ensure that all SED offices and staff are providing clear and consistent information and guidance in a timely manner
- Ensure that information on the State Education Department website is easy to navigate

Four County School Boards Association

CHARTER SCHOOLS

When originally authorized in New York State in 1998, charter schools were believed by some to be an opportunity to improve student learning by providing alternatives for students at risk in "other" public schools. While there have been successes and failures among charter schools, that data, if collected, has never been analyzed or publicized and yet they continue to drain resources from local districts. We ask the Regents to:

- Advocate for a comprehensive, independent, data driven analysis of existing charter schools' educational and financial performance before renewing those charters and publish the findings, thereby allowing all public schools to replicate the successes and avoid the failures
- Advocate for reform of the funding mechanism to one that is separate from other public schools
- Authorize a review of Charter School Regulations for the purpose of determining which regulations will provide flexibility and can be applied to other k-12 school districts and then approve them for implementation
- Allow all public schools the same freedom from onerous mandates and reporting requirements where appropriate
- Consider the fiscal and programmatic impact on other public schools and the community when authorizing a charter
- Hold charter schools accountable to the same academic outcomes and fiscal stewardship requirements as other public schools and support efforts to ensure fiscal oversight by state entities

TEACHING AS A PROFESSION

Student success is directly related to the quality of the teacher in the classroom. A well-trained faculty is essential. To ensure that every student has the advantage of consistently high quality teachers, we urge the Regents to:

- Improve the Part 83 Process
- Allow an alternative path to certification and provide for local flexibility and creative staffing solutions
- Advocate for incentives to increase the number of teachers in math, science, and technology and other areas experiencing a shortage of candidates
- Transform teacher and administrator preparation programs:
- Establish a common sense approach to the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR)
- Promote the "NYS Code of Ethics for Educators" presented to the Board of Regents and accepted for dissemination in July of 2002

PARTNERS IN ADVOCACY

As partners in the effort to educate all of the State's public school students to college and career readiness, we urge the Regents to join us in advocating for:

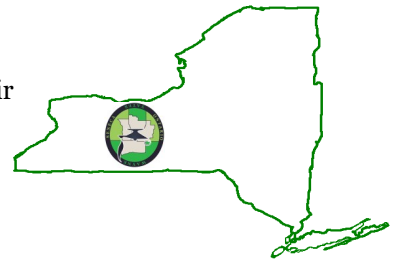
- A funding formula that is adequate, equitable, flexible, predictable and clear
- Funding for costs associated with all state mandates
- An end to legislative generated education policy requirements
- Restoration of the BOCES board's authority to negotiate the District Superintendent's Salary

Bill Buchko - Legislative Committee Co-Chair

Robert Groom - Legislative Committee Co-Chair

Tom Nespeca - Executive Director

Beth Thomas - President



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MARCUS WHITMAN MARION NEWARK NORTH ROSE-WOLCOTT PENN YAN PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS
SENECA FALLS SODUS SOUTH SENECA WAYNE WAYNE-FINGER LAKES BOCES WILLIAMSON