

Cuomo's Office Goes on Offense in Letter to SED...

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8. Do you support using technology to improve public education, like offering online AP courses by college faculty to high schools students who do not have any such courses now, even though these changes have been resisted by education special interests?

9. What would you do about mayoral control in NYC and do you support mayoral control in other municipalities? What changes and improvements would you make to NYC mayoral control?

10. There are approximately 700 school districts in New York, many of which have declining enrollment. Do you think we should restructure the current system through mergers, consolidations, or regionalization? If so, how would you do it?

11. As you know, the appointment and selection process of the Board of Regents is unique in that, unlike other agencies, selections and appointments are made by the legislature. Would you make changes to the selection and appointment process? If so, what are they?

12. Chancellor, the Board of Regents is about to replace Dr. King; can we design an open and transparent selection process so parents, teachers, and legislators have a voice?

Several weeks ago Governor Cuomo said that improving education is thwarted by the monopoly of the education bureaucracy. The education bureaucracy's mission is to sustain the bureaucracy and the status quo and therefore it is often the enemy of change. The result is the current system perpetuates the bureaucracy, but fails our students in many ways.

Tackling these questions with bold policy and leadership could truly transform public education and finally have it focus on the student as opposed to the bureaucracy.

With Commissioner King's imminent departure, we hope he can give us his best advice now free from external pressure before his departure. I've worked closely with Dr. King over the past several years and I want to wish him much success in his new endeavor. On behalf of Governor Cuomo, I look forward to hearing your responses by December 31 so they can be considered in the governor's state of the state address.

Sincerely,

Jim Malatras
Director of State Operations ■

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Embracing 2014 NYS Released Test Items

Opinion piece by Dr. Bruce H. Crowder,
Senior Researcher for Educational Vistas, Inc.

Now that teachers have access to 2014 released test items, multiple choice, and performance, what do they do with them? That is the question!

Since the advent of Common Core-based testing, this is the first time SED has released a significant portion of its tests for grades 3-8, ELA and math, for public review. Also, the released items are mapped to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) with annotations. This is remarkable!

These tests have been used for the past two years with disastrous results. It may be assumed that the goal of these tests is to measure students' overall mastery of Common Core. They are given with the assumption that students are prepared to take them. Nothing could be further from the truth! Not only have CCSS not been fully implemented with requisite shifts, but also these standards are not meaningful until they exist within testing formats. In this reform the tests inform the standards.

Therefore, the released test items need to be studied and used. Teachers and administrators should examine how the items work with insights from the annotations. In addition, the new formats need to be built into regular instruction. For example, constructed response items require an inference and two details. Nothing more is required. Why, then, are students writing extended paragraphs in attempting to respond to them over the past two testing administrations? While this practice may have worked in the past, it now has the adverse effect of preventing many students from completing the test.

So, aside from studying and integrating similar test formats within instruction, I recommend that schools consider using the released test items in an instructional manner at each grade and subject. First, share the scoring rubrics with students! For example, in ELA, students read the passages and complete the related test items, not for a grade, but for the opportunity to experience the manner in which the standards are tested. Whatever scores are generated may be used to compare current results with those from the spring of 2014.

Dismiss the idea of teaching to the test; however, embrace the idea of understanding the deeper nature of the standards by the manner in which they are assessed.

Dr. Bruce H. Crowder is a senior researcher for Educational Vistas, Inc. He is a former NYS assistant commissioner for Quality Assurance and the Education and Accountability Program. Dr. Crowder may be reached at evibruce@aol.com. ■

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