

Recommended Actions for SED and Legislature Accrue from Senate Hearings

Senator Flanagan, chairperson of the Senate Education Committee, conducted five regional hearings between September 17 and November 13 in order to assess progress in regard to “The Regents Reform Agenda.” On December 12, the senator released a report on behalf of committee members that includes recommended actions to be taken by the State Education Department and by members of the state legislature. The Senate Committee report states that, “Repeatedly, over the course of thirty hours, 115 witnesses testified and close to 1000 pages of written testimony were received as part of the public record. All addressed significant and deep concerns about testing, privacy, the implementation of common core, and the lack of meaningful communication between SED and all stakeholders.”

The report recommends SED take the following actions:

- Expedite federal waivers from mandates on various testing restrictions, including those for students with disabilities and English language learners.
- Immediately accelerate the development and availability of missing modules.
- Align assessments proportionately to the curriculum modules actually implemented.
- Impose an immediate one-year delay in launching the full operation of the Education Data Portal (EDP).
- Increase funding for professional development.

[See [SED News Release](#) for recently announced department initiatives.]

The report signals the following legislative actions to be taken:

- P-2 bill – to prohibit standardized testing in grades pre-k through grade 2
- Unnecessary Testing bill – to require the Commissioner to expedite a review of APPR plans **solely** to eliminate unnecessary student assessments
- Privacy bill – to strengthen protections of personal information stored on the statewide data portal, and to establish significant civil and criminal penalties for unauthorized disclosure, and create independent oversight within SED on matters related to privacy
- Truth-In-Testing bill – to require the commissioner to report on the effectiveness of common core state tests and require an independent audit to review and evaluate the New York State common core testing program

The report recognized a “consistent, coherent theme [in testimony] that common core standards are laudable and accomplish many positive things for our students.” However, in regard to common core implementation, the report also asserts that “There appears to be a significant disconnect between those who propose policy (Regents) compared to those who have to actually implement it in the district, the school, the classroom, and even the home.” It was also recognized that the State Education Department offered expectations, guidance, and support that were well intentioned but not fully delivered. The report recommends an “implement, align, and then assess” approach to common core phase-in. Moreover, the committee finds that there is a pressing need for additional support for professional development stating that “The time is right, the need is acute and the value is without debate.”

The Senate Education Committee provided a copy of the official record, including hearing transcripts and written testimony, to Regents Chancellor Merryl Tisch. The senator's transmittal letter stated strong support for rigorous academic standards, but described the State Education Department's planning, preparation, and execution in connection with common core implementation as "glaringly deficient." Specifically, the letter summarized trends in testimony indicating that there was very poor communication from SED to all stakeholders – especially parents; and called for an immediate and thorough review of the EngageNY website to determine its efficacy, accessibility, relevancy, and clarity for all who visit the site.

SAANYS delivered testimony at the October 1 Senate Hearing that was held in Syracuse, New York. Following the hearings, on November 18, SAANYS Executive Director Kevin Casey, along with leaders from other educational organizations, met with Senator Flanagan to discuss the content of testimony delivered at the hearings and to suggest possible courses of action in regard to pre-k through grade 2 testing, personally identifiable student information, and implementation of the Regents reform agenda. The Senate Education Committee Report, SAANYS October 1 Testimony and recommendations provided by SAANYS to Senator Flanagan are posted on the association website.

For more information about the Senate Hearings or SAANYS actions and recommendations, contact James Viola, director of government relations, at JViola@saanys.org.