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Secretary-Treasurer

January 14, 2021

Betty Rosa
Commissioner of Education
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Commissioner,

Teachers and students have been through a difficult year since the pandemic hit New York last March. For the last quarter of the 2019-20 school year schools went remote and schools had to scramble to provide students with access to the internet, and teachers had to shift their lessons on the fly to provide packets of work and lessons on the computer. All of this occurred while relatives became sick with the virus, some died, and New York became the epicenter of the virus outbreak. The decision to request a waiver from the federal testing requirement was easy because no one was in school to take the tests.

As you can see from the reopening plans, schools have not returned to normal instruction this year. Most districts are using a hybrid model with students in school two days a week. Teachers are finding it difficult to properly teach all the standards using this model. Many students have struggled to keep up because instruction was remote for several months and now this year most students are attending school in a hybrid model. Throughout this school year there has not been a standardized mode of instruction across the state. Schools have varying degrees of in person, hybrid, and remote instruction. Without standardized instructional modes there should not be a standardized test at the end of the year. On top of this, teachers are trying to address the social emotional needs of students caused by the pandemic and racial unrest caused by the death of George Floyd. Given the recent surge, it is unlikely that will change much for the rest of the school year, we urge you to request a federal waiver of the grade 3-8 and high school testing requirements to relieve the current pressure on the school system.

A second concern is the current schedule for the implementation of the Next Generation Learning Standards and the new tests based on the standards. Work on preparing to implement the Next Generation Learning Standards has come to a halt as districts and teachers have focused on the impact the pandemic has had on teaching and learning. Instead of professional development on the new standards, districts had to focus professional development on remote and hybrid learning. In addition, teachers have struggled during the pandemic to teach all the standards required in each grade. Teachers must be given the proper time by their administrators or district curriculum experts, within their school day, to collaborate with their colleagues and be trained on the shifts. Teachers must be provided time to make curriculum changes and develop local assessments. Teachers must have time to locally assess where students are before moving onto new learning. Therefore, the state should help districts by delaying full implementation of the Next Generation Learning Standards. The full implementation of the standards should be moved to the 2023-24 school year to give districts time to properly prepare. Districts will need to provide teachers with time over the next two years to help students reach mastery of the standards at the child's pace, since time may have been lost in the shift to hybrid and remote learning. This change in standards implementation should be coupled with postponing the new tests based on the Next Generation Learning Standards until the spring of 2024.

Commissioner Rosa

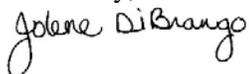
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Children in New York have lost so much throughout the pandemic. Their social and emotional wellbeing must come first, or they simply cannot learn. As education leaders, we can ensure they do not lose out on showing us what they know and are able to do. We can be sure we do everything we can to give them the time and equitable resources they deserve to show us mastery at their pace. We cannot punish them with new standards and tests that most in the education community are not ready to fully implement.

We would be happy to discuss these recommendations with you further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jolene DiBrango".

Jolene DiBrango

NYSUT Executive Vice President

cc: Chancellor Young
Members of the Board of Regents