EDWARD P. RA
Assemblyman 19th District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
Education Committee

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Higher Education
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July 29, 2015

MaryEllen Elia
Commissioner, State Education Department
New York State Education Building
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Commissioner Elia:

The Assembly Minority wishes to congratulate you on your recent appointment to the New York State Education Department as Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York (USNY). We are writing to share some ideas that members of the Assembly Minority Conference have about education reform and the future of New York's schools.

As we are sure you are aware, recently enacted legislation authorized you as commissioner of education to conduct a comprehensive review of education standards currently administered by the State Education Department. We sincerely hope that the opportunity to take a fresh look at the controversial Common Core standards will not go unheeded.

In the fall of 2013, members of the Assembly Minority Conference conducted 11 public forums on Common Core and related education reform issues throughout the state. We listened to numerous teachers, administrators, parents, students, and other interested parties and explored a variety of topics including Common Core, standardized testing, special education, and state aid. Attached for your review is a report, "At the Educational Crossroads," detailing our conclusions and recommendations. Copies of this report are also available at http://scribd.com/doc/201479293/At-the-Educational-Crossroads.

The report presents the Achieving Pupil Preparedness & Launching Excellence (APPLE) Plan, which we have since introduced in the Assembly in January 2014. The APPLE Plan endeavored to provide solutions to address critical issues in the areas of Curriculum, Teacher Support, Funding, Student Anxiety, Special Education, and Data Collection. The APPLE Plan, along with companion legislation, seeks to ensure our educational standards not only set high goals for our students, but also are designed to meet the needs of all of New York's public school students. To that end we strongly recommend that this review include:

1) An analysis of the age and developmental appropriateness of our current educational standards including soliciting input from experts in the fields of early childhood development and early childhood education

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2) An analysis of the impact our education standards have on students of various family structures and socio-economic backgrounds, including time spent on homework and test preparation

3) An analysis of the appropriateness of our educational standards for children with individualized education plans and other learning disabilities

4) An analysis of the appropriateness of our educational standards for children of limited English language proficiency and those lacking any formal education in their native language

We also believe it is essential that the panel charged with conducting this review include those currently working in the field in New York's public schools including administrators, school board members, teachers, and parents. This should include parents and teachers of special education students and English language learners.

The Assembly Minority Conference stands committed to improving education for all New York's students and is ready to share what we have learned with you and the Board of Regents in order to make our education system better and more responsive to our students' needs.

Sincerely,

Assemblyman Edward Ra
Ranking Member
Assembly Education Committee
19th Assembly District

Assemblyman Brian Kolb
Assembly Minority Leader
131st Assembly District

Assemblyman Dave McDonough
Education Committee Member
14th Assembly District

Assemblyman Al Graf
Education Committee Member
4th Assembly District

Assemblyman Dean Murray
Education Committee Member
3rd Assembly District

Assemblywoman Claudia Tenney
Education Committee Member
101st Assembly District

Assemblyman Peter Lopez
Education Committee Member
102nd Assembly District

Assemblywoman Jane Corwin
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115th Assembly District

Assemblyman Steven McLaughlin
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107th Assembly District

Assemblyman Tom McKevitt
17th Assembly District

Assemblyman Chad Lupinacci
10th Assembly District

Assemblyman Clifford Crouch
122nd Assembly District

Assemblyman Philip Palmesano
132nd Assembly District

Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis
64th Assembly District

Assemblyman Stephen Hawley
139th Assembly District

Assemblyman Bob Oaks
130th Assembly District

Assemblyman Bill Nojay
133rd Assembly District

Assemblyman Marc Butler
118th Assembly District

Assemblyman Ken Blakenbush
117th Assembly District

Assemblyman David DiPietro
147th Assembly District

Assemblyman Michael Montesano
15th Assembly District

Assemblyman Karl Brabenec
98th Assembly District

Assemblyman Raymond Walter
146th Assembly District

Assemblyman Joseph Borrelli
62nd Assembly District

Assemblyman James Tedisco
112th Assembly District

Assemblyman Joseph Giglio
148th Assembly District

Assemblyman Brian Curran
21st Assembly District

Assemblyman Michael Fitzpatrick
8th Assembly District

Assemblyman Christopher Friend
124th Assembly District

Assemblyman Joseph Saladino
9th Assembly District

Assemblyman Kieran Lalor
105th Assembly District

Assemblyman Dan Stec
114th Assembly District

Assemblywoman Janet Duprey
115th Assembly District

Assemblywoman Angela Wozniak
143rd Assembly District

Assemblyman Peter Lawrence
134th Assembly District

Assemblyman Andrew Raia
12th Assembly District

Assemblyman William Barclay
120th Assembly District

Assemblyman Andrew Goodell
150th Assembly District

Assemblyman Steve Katz
94th Assembly District

Assemblyman Andrew Garbarino
7th Assembly District

Assemblyman Anthony Palumbo
2nd Assembly District