



www.performanceassessment.org  
317 East 67th Street  
New York, New York 10065  
212-570-5394

**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED**  
**to**  
**The New NY Education Reform Commission**  
**by**  
**Ann Cook, Executive Director**  
**The New York Performance Standards Consortium**  
**October 18, 2012**

The Commission is looking for “solution-oriented input” on educational programs that improve student achievement and result in college and career readiness. Ironically, New York State already has a very successful model, the New York Performance Standards Consortium, that has been recognized across the country for its success with urban students. It has been engaging students and teachers since 1995 (initiated under Commissioner Thomas Sobol) when it received a variance from four of the five Regents exams and was asked to design a new approach to curriculum and assessment.

In light of the success of Consortium schools in preparing students for college and career (see specifics below), we strongly suggest the Commission investigate options for making the Consortium's system available to other schools and districts searching for a more successful model and ready to make the transition from a standardized test culture to a practitioner-designed performance assessment system. By integrating curriculum and assessment and involving teachers in the creation of graduation tasks and rubrics, the Consortium has designed an academically challenging and meaningful route to post-graduation success. It deserves your consideration as an endorsed pathway to graduation.

The results from schools in the New York Performance Standards Consortium show that practitioner-designed performance-based assessment can work well for the students that test-driven “reforms” are supposed to benefit but so often fail. They are created by teachers and

rooted in actual school curricula. In its 2012 report, *Education for the 21st Century*, [[http://performanceassessment.org/articles/DataReport\\_NY\\_PSC.pdf](http://performanceassessment.org/articles/DataReport_NY_PSC.pdf)] the Consortium provides

Commission Testimony

-2-

18 October 2012

evidence of its striking success. Its schools significantly outperform other New York City public schools while serving a similar population. The Consortium report includes examples of the kinds of performance based assessment tasks (PBATs) used across the network of schools.

The student population of the Consortium's 26 public schools located in New York City (two additional schools are outside the City) mirrors the city's student body. They have nearly identical shares of blacks, Latinos, English language learners and students with disabilities. However, the Consortium dropout rate is only half that of NYC public schools. Graduation rates for all categories of students are higher than for NYC, while its rates for ELLs and students with disabilities nearly double the city's.

In 2011, 86% of its African American and 90% of its Latino male graduates received acceptances to college. National averages are only 37% and 43%, respectively. While 81% of U.S. four-year college enrollees remain after two years, 93% of Consortium grads are still in college, though they are far more likely to be low-income than the U.S. average. These data provide strong predictive validity evidence about the quality and accuracy of the schools' graduation assessments.

The Consortium gathers a wide array of indicators about its schools that are far more useful than standardized test scores. For example, its schools have fewer discipline issues. Suspensions at Consortium schools are 5% while they are 11% for NYC high schools and 12% for charter schools. Consortium schools also have much greater teacher stability than does the average city school. Turnover rates are 15% for Consortium schools, 25% for charters, and a staggering 58% for NYC high schools overall.

### **The performance assessments**

The Consortium requires students to complete four PBAT's "to demonstrate college and career readiness and to qualify for graduation." These include an analytic essay, a social studies research paper, a science experiment, and applied mathematics problems. Precise topics "emerge from class readings and discussion. In some classes, the tasks are crafted by the teacher and in other instances by the student." Teachers, with student input, determine which particular task will be credited as a graduation level paper or project in each subject area.

The Consortium has state permission to administer only one of the state graduation tests, English Language Arts. The tasks, generally completed in 11th and 12th grades, replace the Regents exams in other subjects and for school accountability.

All the tasks completed for the common graduation level are evaluated using Consortium-wide rubrics. The well-developed rubrics, written and revised as needed by Consortium teachers, allow accurate evaluations of student work across schools. Moderation studies are conducted to review the reliability of student work and the challenge of teacher assignments.

*Education for the 21st Century* provides sample tasks and the rubrics. On-demand responses in all four subject disciplines are required for the oral component. For example, in literature each

Commission Testimony

-3-

18 October 2012

student must write and orally defend an analytic paper based on a defined set of requirements. Sample topics show the wide range of literature and interests addressed by the students.

To fulfill the City's requirement to administer periodic assessments throughout the year in English language arts and math, the Consortium has developed tasks for its NYC schools to use across the curriculum, including science and social studies. These help prepare students for the graduation assessments.

Each school maintains student collections of work as a way for students and teachers to chronicle a student's growth. The college persistence data show that the extensive reading and writing and long-term planning required for the performance assessments prepare students well for college work.

[Www.performanceassessment.org](http://www.performanceassessment.org)