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Too often students are ignored in the conversation revolving around education policy. Students are America's most underrepresented population, and today we have no say in the policies that most affect our future. As we investigate the best ways to reform New York's education system, I would like to liken the absence of the student voice to a detective conducting an investigation without interviewing the victims. Not only is it irresponsible. It is unprofessional.

I want to congratulate both Governor Cuomo and the members of the Commission for being some of the first policymakers in our country's history to give students a voice at the table. We may not yet have seat, but we will make room.

After all, this would be an incomplete and inconclusive investigation without the student voice.

In fact, many of the problems we currently face could be less severe or nonexistent if students had had a seat at the table in the past. That is why I am proposing that Governor Cuomo establish a team of student advisors, which would not only enable him to more effectively be the lobbyist for the students, but would also ensure that education best reflects the needs of present day students.

Society is ever evolving, which means how students are taught and what they learn should be ever evolving as well. We must establish a flexible system that will allow schooling to evolve with society or recognize that education reform will be a perpetual issue.

One thing is for certain: We will perpetually need the input of students or our efforts will be ill advised.

Students would tell you what is wrong with their respective schools. Students would tell you how they best learn. Students would also tell you that administrators need to be stronger in their efforts to determine what teachers are best fit to teach in their respective schools. This input is essential and not including it is quite consequential.

It is more effective to include students in the dialogue than it is to guess what will work best as if it were a multiple-choice question. That is not to say that the students hold all of the answers, rather that you could not confidently draw a conclusion to reforming education without them.

There are many stakeholders in this crucial conversation, but no one has a larger stake in this than the students. It is our education. It is our future.

That is why I implore the Commission and Governor Cuomo to ensure that students always have a seat at the table and that the student voice is always heard.

The self-fulfilling prophecy is a recurring issue in education today. Without strong breakfast programs, serviceable athletic facilities, operational libraries, and suitable classroom resources, many students across our great state are left with low expectations and a low self-esteem. Regardless, teachers are blamed for the failure of their students when they are both set up for failure to begin with.

Rather than giving all teachers and students comparable resources we are racing them to the top. That's like having Olympic sprinters race from different starting positions.

This game isn't fair and this investigation, both on a state and federal level, has been far from thorough. We need to raise expectations while showing students that we believe in them by both giving them comparable resources and a seat at the table.

Until then, the time and money spent on teacher evaluations and standardized test scores are all for naught.

Together, let us reimagine, reevaluate, and revolutionize New York State's education system.