

**THE BOARD OF REGENTS
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

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Testimony of Regent Robert M. Bennett

For Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's Commission on Education Reform

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Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the Commission.

Please consider a renewed and urgent comprehensive plan for early childhood. The State agencies State Education Department, Office of Mental Health, Department of Health, Office of Children and Family Services, People with Development Disabilities, collaborated to submit such a plan to the Federal United States Department of Education. While it did not receive funding, the ideas are worthwhile and should be pursued. There are several reasons to act:

- The GAP begins prior to Pre-K
- Existing resources can be and should be re-deployed
- The science of learning and brain development is clear and conclusive
- We know how to measure readiness for kindergarten
- The State through a multi-agency RFP can cause the same collaboration at the local level
- Higher education and counties can play a significant role
- We have best practices and know what success looks like

- A STRIVE model for measuring several indicators is possible
- This requires different actions by all agencies/State Education Department has and will continue to fully collaborate
- The Governor and Legislature can make this happen
- Early and comprehensive children services pay large dividends five, ten and fifteen years into the future

Family Engagement and Family Support Centers in Schools

Please consider a NY State multi-agency RFP to both continue and create effective partnerships among schools and Health and Human Service providers that will solve the growing socio-economic problems confronting families. The rationale:

- Schools are keenly aware of the problems facing students and their families yet are not prepared to respond but public and private agencies can and will respond
- Information sharing is not a barrier to proper case management
- There is a direct relationship between student/family problems and academic achievement
- Shared accountability must be a requirement to apply for the State RFP
- Re-deploy existing resources to locally created partnerships
- There is ample evidence that such partnerships: improve academic performance and solve family problems.

School Leaders

To be an effective school leader (Principal) you must have autonomy for personnel, budget, and performance. Prospective school leaders could benefit from 12 credit hours at schools of business

Career and College Readiness

The Board of Regents and State Education Department is preparing significant options to expand career continued pathways for all students.

Local Governance

The scope of involvement for school boards and personnel should be limited to the hiring and evaluation for the superintendent.

Proliferation

There are far too many school districts; a reduction to reflect counties and regions would be a positive direction to take.