



# Common Core Implementation Panel

## *Putting Students First*



**Report to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo**  
**March 2014 Initial Recommendations**

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## **Common Core Implementation Panel**

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## Executive Summary

New York stands at a crossroads in our pursuit of a quality education for all students and a sound economic future for New Yorkers.

One path leads to the successful, thoughtful and inclusive implementation of higher standards that prepare the next generation of New Yorkers for college, high-skill careers and active civic engagement – the ideals embodied by the Common Core Learning Standards.

The alternative path represents the continuation of anxiety and confusion that far too many parents and students in communities across the state associate with the implementation of the Common Core. This path endangers the very vital reforms that the State has set as its goals and, if the status quo continues, the Common Core standards themselves – which would leave our students unprepared for the future.

Forty-five states – representing over 90% of the nation’s population – have adopted the Common Core standards. In 2010, New York became the 21st state to decide to implement the Common Core when the Board of Regents adopted the standards. Yet despite the tireless work and good intention of many educators, the management and implementation of the Common Core by the State Education Department – which is the entity responsible for its roll-out – has resulted in stress and frustration for parents and students and insufficient support from and for the public, teachers and principals.

The Common Core is vital to preparing New Yorkers for success in college, careers and society. But it must be better implemented – effective immediately – in order to earn the confidence of parents, students, educators and community leaders statewide. If significant improvements do not occur quickly, these key reforms designed to help students – and the hard work of countless teachers, principals and superintendents – will continue to be placed at risk.

The Common Core Implementation Panel recommends commitment to the Common Core coupled with immediate course corrections and sustained support designed to move forward while better serving students and parents and ensuring the successful implementation of the Common Core standards. This report does not reflect all issues with implementation of the Common Core, but does address the areas that seem to be of the greatest concern and achieve the greatest consensus within the Panel. The Panel looks forward to continuing to address these important issues.

The Panel’s March 2014 recommendations follow:

### **Issue 1: Protect Students from Inappropriate High-Stakes Testing**

#### **Recommendation 1.1: Ban standardized “bubble tests” for young children**

To protect young children from anxiety and to promote research-based educational practices, the State should prohibit the use of standardized “bubble tests” for children in pre-kindergarten through second grade.

#### **Recommendation 1.2: Protect students from high stakes based on unfair test results**

Before Common Core State testing begins in April, the State should:

- Ensure that the results of State assessments in English and math for students in grades 3-8 will not be used against students and will not appear on their permanent records.

- Phase in higher pass scores for the Regents exams and ensure teachers have time to implement course materials before high school students are tested on the new standards.
- End inappropriate testing for students with disabilities and English Language Learners, while ensuring accountability for the performance of these students.

### **Recommendation 1.3: Use instructional time for teaching and learning – not over-testing**

Placing students first requires determining which assessments are truly necessary and beneficial, and reducing the testing burden wherever possible. The State should:

- Cap the amount of time that can be used for standardized tests and for test prep.
- Improve transparency about what standardized tests students are required to take, and why.
- Make it easier for school districts to eliminate unnecessary testing.

## **Issue 2: Provide Better Support for Parents and Teachers**

### **Recommendation 2.1: Treat parents as essential partners in Common Core implementation**

Parents want what is best for their children, and – if implemented correctly – the Common Core can help parents realize their aspirations for their children and the next generation of New Yorkers. To achieve this goal, the State should create state-of-the-art online resources and toolkits that are linguistically and culturally appropriate to show parents what the Common Core is, what to expect and how to help their children at home. In addition to a massive online effort, the State’s effort should include local community events and the dissemination of accessible and practical material through schools, non-profit organizations, libraries and other partners.

### **Recommendation 2.2: Ensure that teachers receive the training they need and deserve**

Successful implementation of the Common Core should always respect the role of teachers and engage them fully. The State should:

- Provide high-quality local professional development opportunities for teachers. High-quality professional development should be accessible to teachers.
- Replicate successful examples of implementation. Schools that are successfully implementing the Common Core in each region should be identified and recruited to serve as models where other local teachers and principals can be invited to see instructional changes in action.
- Rethink the use of time so teachers can collaborate.

### **Recommendation 2.3: Give educators access to quality Common Core curriculum resources as quickly as possible**

The State should ensure rapid completion of the unfinished Common Core curriculum modules and continuously improve all of the modules through the involvement of teachers and other educators and experts so that hard-working and dedicated teachers have the resources they need. In addition, the State should significantly increase the number of assessment questions released following the Common Core tests so that teachers, parents and the public can see how students are tested. Finally, the State should ensure that teachers receive timely and useful data from assessments.

### **Issue 3: Improve public trust in Common Core implementation**

#### **Recommendation 3.1: Ensure ongoing parental and citizen participation and input into Common Core implementation**

The State should appoint an independent public task force that includes parents, educators, legislators, and business, civic and community leaders to provide ongoing review of Common Core implementation across the state and make recommendations as needed to replicate successes and address the need for further implementation modifications. This will build trust and confidence, and provide networks of New Yorkers who can assist educators and government leaders in the implementation of the Common Core.

### **Issue 4: Protect student privacy**

#### **Recommendation 4.1: Establish strict data protection and security requirements, while ensuring that appropriate educational and operational data-sharing can occur**

The Common Core Implementation Panel understands and respects parents' fears about the privacy of their children's data, and recognizes concerns about collecting unnecessary or intrusive data. The State should enact laws and policies that establish and/or reinforce strict data protection requirements, including:

- Establishment of a "Parents Bill of Rights for Data Privacy" that includes complete transparency about what data is collected by the State and by school districts, who it is shared with and why;
- Procedures for parent notification in case of any data breach, including by a third-party, and strong penalties for violations;
- Full disclosure of school district privacy procedures to parents; and
- Naming of a Chief Privacy Officer for the State Education Department whose responsibilities include establishing standards for educational agency data security and privacy policies.

The Common Core Implementation Panel does not support a "parent opt-out" of the use of data, which could place essential academic and operational functions in jeopardy.

#### **Recommendation 4.2: Halt the State's relationship with inBloom**

The debate about this one provider has become a distraction to the successful implementation of the Common Core. The State's relationship with inBloom should be halted, and State leaders should consider alternative paths to accomplish the goals of increased data transparency and analytics.

### **Conclusion**

New York is at a crossroads. The successful implementation of the Common Core, with the support of teachers and parents, is vital to the future of our state. We cannot and must not let uneven and poorly executed implementation divert us from realizing a bright and promising future for New York State's students and citizens. New York can and must address these challenges forthrightly and fairly. Engaging citizens, parents and teachers, providing teachers the time and support to improve implementation, and addressing the public's concerns, is within our power and capacity to achieve. Our students, our parents, and our educators deserve no less.

## Recommendations of the Common Core Implementation Panel

New York stands at a crossroads in our pursuit of a quality education for all students and a sound economic future for New Yorkers.

One path leads to the successful, thoughtful and inclusive implementation of higher standards that prepare the next generation of New Yorkers for college, high-skill careers and active civic engagement – the ideals embodied by the Common Core Learning Standards.

The alternative path represents the continuation of anxiety and confusion that far too many parents and students in communities across the state associate with the implementation of the Common Core. This path endangers the very vital reforms that the State has set as its goals and, if the status quo continues, the Common Core standards themselves – which would leave our students unprepared for the future.

For the strength of our communities, our citizenry and our economy, New York cannot afford to let that happen.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo formed the Common Core Implementation Panel to undertake an immediate and comprehensive review of the rollout of the Common Core standards in New York State and to deliver a set of action-focused recommendations to improve the Common Core's implementation and ensure its success.

"The Common Core Implementation Panel recommends commitment to the Common Core coupled with immediate course corrections."

The Common Core Implementation Panel recognizes the vital potential of the Common Core to help bring learning to life in our classrooms and prepare students for our high-skill society. As Center for American Progress Executive Vice President for Policy Carmel Martin told the Common Core Implementation Panel:

*"The Common Core gives students not just the knowledge but also the skills they need for success. Twenty-first century learners need critical thinking skills, the ability to use data to problem solve and make arguments, the capacity to digest complex text, and the ability to understand the why and not just the how of mathematical equations. Standards give parents confidence that the curricula used to teach their children are based on evidence of what they will need to be successful—not just in college but also in their careers and lives."*<sup>1</sup>

The New York State Educational Conference Board, representing seven of the state's major educational associations, likewise testified that, "The Common Core Learning Standards represent the most significant increase in student expectations New York schools have ever faced. Our students need and deserve the best efforts of local educators and state officials working together to help them succeed."<sup>2</sup>

These aspirations have led 45 states – over 90% of the nation's population – to adopt the Common Core standards. In 2010, New York became the 21st state to decide to implement the Common Core when the Board of Regents adopted the standards. Yet despite the tireless work and good intention of many educators and pockets of promise, the management and implementation of the Common Core by the State Education Department – which is the entity responsible for its roll-out – has resulted in stress and frustration for parents and students and insufficient support from and for the public, teachers and principals.

The Common Core is vital to preparing New Yorkers for success in college, careers and society. But it must be better implemented – effective immediately – in order to earn the confidence of parents, students, educators and community leaders statewide. If significant improvements do not occur quickly, these key reforms designed to help students – and the hard work of countless teachers, principals and superintendents – will continue to be placed at risk.

### **Frustration and Anxiety with Common Core Implementation**

"I'm a tough one -- I want the kids to learn the stuff...The thing that concerns me is the amount of time spent preparing for tests." – PTA leader, *Newsday*, 9/30/2013

"There's no sample of the Common Core algebra test at all, so we don't even know what kind of assessment we're building to...I just think they've done a poor job of organizing the Common Core program." – Principal, *Syracuse Post-Standard*, 11/4/2013

"We're scrambling to do what we believe the state is going to be asking us to do, but not all the materials are there, and not everything has been released from the state yet, and that does make it very difficult as a teacher." – Teacher, *Press & Sun Bulletin*, 11/20/2013

The Common Core Implementation Panel recommends commitment to the Common Core coupled with immediate course corrections and sustained support designed to move forward while better serving students and parents and ensuring the successful implementation of the Common Core standards. This report does not reflect all issues with implementation of the Common Core, but does address the areas that seem to be of the greatest concern and achieve the greatest consensus within the Panel. The Panel looks forward to continuing to address these important issues.

The Panel's March 2014 recommendations follow:

### **Issue 1: Protect Students from Inappropriate High-Stakes Testing**

#### **Recommendation 1.1: Ban standardized "bubble tests" for young children**

School districts across New York State use more than 1,500 different tests to assess what our youngest children are learning.<sup>3</sup> These assessments vary considerably in how they work and what they are designed to measure, but there is no excuse for tests that are developmentally inappropriate and that fail to recognize the unique ways that children in pre-kindergarten through second grade learn.

In testimony to the Common Core Implementation Panel, Children's Institute Executive Director Dirk Hightower differentiated between inappropriate "standardized tests, as defined by bubble sheets" versus "authentic assessment" of young children's learning and progress. Authentic assessment – which involves looking at how students perform and show their understanding in real-world situations instead of on standardized tests – Dr. Hightower explained, "is a very valuable tool and should be continued."<sup>4</sup>

To protect young children from anxiety and to promote research-based educational practices, and as advanced by the Assembly, Senate and Regents, the State should prohibit the use of standardized "bubble tests" for children in pre-kindergarten through second grade for any purpose other than diagnostic use (to help teachers assess children's skills in a developmentally appropriate manner), or if required by the federal government.

### **Recommendation 1.2: Protect students from high stakes based on unfair test results**

The purpose of the Common Core standards is to enable students to achieve at high levels, and parents and students universally seek educational success. But telling children that they “pass” or “fail” a test they have not been adequately prepared for creates incredible stress, does a terrible disservice to students and parents, and undermines confidence in the State’s education reform agenda.

Before Common Core State testing begins in April, the State should:

- **Ensure that the results of State assessments in English and math for students in grades 3-8 will not be used against students and will not appear on their permanent records.** Using Common Core exams for more diagnostic – rather than punitive – purposes for students will help children and parents transition to these new, higher standards. Until implementation is successful, Common Core test results should not be used as the sole or primary basis for major decisions like grade promotion and student placement, and should not appear on students’ permanent records.
- **Phase in higher pass scores for the Regents exams and ensure teachers have course materials before high school students are tested on the new standards.** The Regents’ decision to delay the implementation of a higher cut score to pass Regents exams from the Class of 2017 to the Class of 2022 is an unfortunate necessity but is appropriate. Equally important is that as the new Common Core Regents exams are unveiled, students should also continue to have the opportunity to take the old Regents exams – and have only the higher score count – until their teachers have had a full year to review and implement complete Common Core curriculum modules in these subjects.
- **End inappropriate testing for students with disabilities and English Language Learners.** All students should be taught to the full extent of their abilities using high standards, but testing needs also to recognize the unique needs of various student populations. The state should have greater flexibility to provide appropriate assessments to students with severe disabilities as well as English Language Learners, while ensuring accountability for the performance of these students, and the federal government should grant all necessary waivers to achieve this goal.

### **Recommendation 1.3: Use instructional time for teaching and learning – not over-testing**

The Common Core standards have the potential to dramatically improve teaching and learning, but far too often they are simply associated with more testing and test preparation. In fact, implementing the Common Core does not and should not require any additional testing, and this message should be clearly communicated to parents, school district officials and the public. Assessment can be beneficial and provide important information to students, teachers and parents, but excessive testing works against our educational goals.

As the national teacher leadership organization TeachPlus indicated to the Common Core Implementation Panel, teachers overwhelmingly support the Common Core but the amount of student testing nationwide represents a “wide-ranging set of expectations that vary – and at times vary considerably – by school district. We found that in many cases, the majority of testing in a district is not the result of federal or state testing requirements but due to additional testing required by school districts.”<sup>5</sup>

“Putting students first requires determining which assessments are truly necessary and beneficial, and reducing the testing burden wherever possible.”

That is certainly the case in New York State, where local assessments represent at least 75% of total testing. In fact, excluding New York City, there are at least 9,000 local tests that are neither required by the Common Core nor the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) law, but are instead implemented at the discretion of local school districts.<sup>6</sup>

Placing students first requires determining which assessments are truly necessary and beneficial, and reducing the testing burden wherever possible. The State should:

- **Cap the amount of time that can be used for standardized tests and for test prep.** For the 2014-15 school year, school districts should spend no more than 1% of instructional time on State assessments and 1% of instructional time giving local standardized tests. This would not apply to performance assessments, portfolios and regular classroom quizzes and exams. But a standardized test that lasts several hours can effectively eliminate an entire day of learning. In addition, to reinforce that class time is for teaching – not standardized test prep – there should be a limit of no more than 2% of instructional time for “test prep” under standardized testing conditions. Enforcing these restrictions should not become another compliance chore; instead, it is an opportunity to re-evaluate the use of time in order to maximize teaching and learning.
- **Improve transparency about what standardized tests students are required to take, and why.** Each school district should issue a Testing Transparency Report to their parents and community members that lists all mandatory standardized tests that are given and explains whether they are required by the State or federal government, or given at local discretion. In addition to providing critical information to parents, the Testing Transparency Report should help school districts ask important questions about whether all of the locally chosen tests are truly necessary. The State should ensure that school districts can produce this information without a local burden. Achieve President Michael Cohen described this recommendation to the Common Core Implementation Panel as a “local assessment audit, with report to parents on which tests have been eliminated, and the value of tests that have been retained.”<sup>7</sup>
- **Make it easier for school districts to eliminate unnecessary testing.** In many cases, decisions to give local tests are spelled out in agreements between the school district and teachers’ union and then included in APPR plans approved by the State Education Department. Building on proposals advanced by the Senate, Assembly and Regents, the State should require expedited review of APPR plan revisions tailored to eliminate unnecessary testing with agreement of a school district and local teachers’ union within 10 days of submission.

### We Must Get Common Core Implementation Right

“We must not turn our back on the opportunity that the Common Core presents. Now is our chance to have a significant, lasting impact on student achievement and success while repositioning our nation as a global leader in education. Outdated learning standards just won’t get the job done. Instead of halting our progress, let’s focus on ways to work together to strengthen the implementation of the Common Core. Our children deserve no less than a concerted effort to get this right.” – Chancellor Nancy Zimpher, SUNY, *Buffalo News*, 2/7/2014

“We need higher standards... This is the way to go if we’re going to be competitive in the world. If it’s not perfect, tweak it, but don’t throw it out.” – Parent, *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 11/14/2013

“The Business Council of New York State strongly supports the higher academic standards in the Common Core and believes that the state must continue to implement the curriculum without delay. We also recognize that several corrective actions must be taken in order to be sure that there is a smooth transition to these new, more rigorous standards. Education reform is important and it is important to get it right.” – Heather Briccetti, The Business Council of New York State, 2/10/2014

“To turn away from the Common Core now would be the wrong reaction. In order to succeed in the current economy, students need to receive a first-rate education.” – Kathy Wylde, Partnership for New York City, *New York Daily News*, 8/7/2013

## Issue 2: Provide Better Support for Parents and Teachers

### **Recommendation 2.1: Treat parents as essential partners in Common Core implementation**

Major changes in our education system need to happen *with* parents – not *to* them. Parents who see their children struggle, who see their test scores plummet, and who do not know why and what to do about it can quickly lose their faith in the process. Parents from all communities are eager to be involved and to help their children, and they are frustrated.

Successfully implementing the Common Core means actively addressing the anxiety and confusion that parents feel; parents must be engaged, not just “educated.” Several presenters pointed to Kentucky, whose commitment to the Common Core is steadfast, as a model of parent and community engagement. Kentucky, which was the first state to adopt the Common Core standards, accompanied their adoption with a sustained campaign of public outreach and the development of easy-to-access resources. Initiatives like “Raise the Bar Louisville” provide practical tips and tools, including videos for parents showing what they can expect their children to be learning at the elementary, middle and high school levels. New York can and must lead the way in its commitment to parents.

“Major changes in our education system need to happen *with* parents – not *to* them.”

Parents want what is best for their children, and – if implemented correctly – the Common Core can help parents realize their aspirations for their children and the next generation of New Yorkers. To achieve this goal, the State should create state-of-the-art online resources – a “bank of resources for families,” as professional development expert Pam Allyn described it to the Common Core Implementation Panel<sup>8</sup> – and toolkits that are linguistically and culturally appropriate to show parents what the Common Core is, what to expect and how to help their children at home. In addition to a massive online effort, the State’s effort should include local in-person community events and the dissemination of accessible and practical material through schools, non-profit organizations, libraries and other partners.

### **Recommendation 2.2: Ensure that teachers receive the training they need and deserve**

The Common Core’s great potential is in its promise to enhance teaching and improve learning so that students develop strong critical thinking and problem-solving skills and are prepared for college and careers in the 21st century. But that promise will only be achieved if teachers receive the tools and training to actually turn Common Core intentions into a reality in their classrooms.

Across New York State, access to and participation in high-quality professional development has been extraordinarily uneven. Many teachers, principals, superintendents and other educators have devoted endless time, energy and commitment to implementing the Common Core. Some exceptional professional development has even been offered in the state – but not locally for many teachers and never at a scale that would lead to broad-based implementation success. The lack of sustained, systemic support is an understandable concern for educators and must be addressed.

Other states have provided a number of successful models for New York to consider. Presenters to the Common Core Implementation Panel cited examples, including Massachusetts’ long experience with education reform, as well as:

- Tennessee, where 42,000 teachers – representing two-thirds of the state’s educators – were trained during a single school year and summer. Trainers were selected from among Tennessee’s most effective teachers.<sup>9</sup>

- Kentucky, which implemented a sustained, multi-year strategy for teacher engagement and professional development that included regional collaboratives that brought together higher education partners and educators from multiple school districts.<sup>10</sup>
- Rhode Island, where teachers became “Common Core Ambassadors” and visited local schools in their own region to engage their peers.<sup>11</sup>
- California, which has provided funding to support county offices and school networks in organizing professional development sessions, development of materials, and preparation of coaches to support instructional practice in schools.

Other approaches, cited by Panel member Professor Linda Darling-Hammond, include a Common Core professional support system based on the Literacy and Numeracy Projects that have been used in England, Australia and Canada. These include packets of high-quality teaching materials, resource documents and videos depicting successful practices, as well as the training of coaches who are made available to work directly with teachers in classrooms. In England, the National Literacy and National Numeracy Centers provide leadership and training for teacher training institutions and consultants, who train school heads, lead math teachers and expert literacy teachers, who in turn support and train other teachers. Similarly, since 2000, the Australian government has been sponsoring the Quality Teacher Programme, a large scale program that provides funding to update and improve teachers’ skills and understandings in priority areas and enhance the status of teaching. Western Australia’s highly successful Getting it Right (GiR) Strategy provides specialist teaching personnel, professional development, and support to select primary schools to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes of high needs students. Each school selects a highly regarded teacher with interest and expertise in numeracy or literacy to be a Specialist Teacher, who is then trained through a series of seven three-day intensive workshops over the course of their initial two-year appointment. These specialists have release time to work side by side with their colleagues to integrate the standards into their practice.

Successful implementation of the Common Core should always respect the role of teachers and engage them fully. The State should:

- **Provide high-quality local professional development opportunities for teachers.** In a large and diverse state like New York, implementing the Common Core requires a mix of local providers and professional development strategies. The State, and every school district, should ensure that teachers have adequate and appropriate training and coaching, developed in collaboration with educators themselves and provided by highly effective teacher-leaders and other experts and practitioners. SUNY, CUNY and independent colleges and universities should be leveraged as strategic regional partners. High-quality professional development should be accessible to and responsive to the needs of teachers.
- **Replicate successful examples of implementation.** Schools that are successfully implementing the Common Core in each region should be identified and recruited to serve as models where other local teachers and principals can be invited to see instructional changes in action. These schools that are more advanced in the implementation process can serve a vital role in demonstrating that success is possible and will provide benefits to students, parents and educators alike. Examples such as Watervliet Elementary School, which the Common Core Implementation Panel learned about in testimony from the school’s principal, should be highlighted.<sup>12</sup>
- **Rethink the use of time so teachers can collaborate.** Many presenters emphasized the importance of teachers working together to develop lessons, collaborate and analyze data in order to successfully change classroom practice. Strategies such as study groups<sup>13</sup> and coaching<sup>14</sup> can provide the structure for this important work without disrupting instruction for students.

**Recommendation 2.3: Give educators access to quality Common Core curriculum resources as quickly as possible**

In addition to professional development, educators need access to high-quality curriculum and classroom materials in order to successfully implement the Common Core. Across the country, development and dissemination of Common Core-aligned curriculum, textbooks and other resources remains an unmet challenge.<sup>15</sup>

In New York, the State Education Department launched an effort called EngageNY that includes curriculum “modules” available at no cost to school districts for their voluntary use and adaptation. Yet nearly four years after New York adopted the Common Core standards, key aspects of the high school curriculum are not yet available. In addition, there are significant differences of opinion regarding the modules themselves: from some who see them as a national model, to others who find them inadequate or unrealistic to implement.

“Nearly four years after New York adopted the Common Core standards, key aspects of the high school curriculum are not yet available.”

For example, in testimony to the Common Core Implementation Panel, Westchester County teacher Christina Hundzynski cited the mismatch between the number of days required to teach just the first five of seven modules in her elementary class and the length of the academic year, recommending that some modules be moved to the next year and that the testing date be pushed back to June:<sup>16</sup>

Days of Instruction	
Instructional Days for the Modules Before Assessment	Number of Available Instructional Days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Module 1- 25 days</li><li>• Module 2 - 7 days</li><li>• Module 3- 43 days</li><li>• Module 4- 20 days</li><li>• Module 5- 45 days</li> <li>• Total Number= <b>140 days</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sept to April = <b>143 days</b></li><li>• Factors to consider:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Field trips</li><li>○ Assemblies</li><li>○ Snow Days</li><li>○ Re-teach days</li><li>○ Review for the test</li></ul></li></ul>

The State should ensure rapid completion of the unfinished Common Core curriculum modules and continuously improve all of the modules through the involvement of teachers and other educators and experts so that hard-working and dedicated teachers have the resources they need. In addition, the State should significantly increase the number of assessment questions released following the Common Core tests so that teachers, parents and the public can see how students are tested. Finally, the State should ensure that teachers receive timely and useful data from assessments.

### **Issue 3: Improve public trust in Common Core implementation**

#### **Recommendation 3.1: Ensure ongoing parental and citizen participation and input into Common Core implementation**

A common theme of presentations to the Common Core Implementation Panel was the importance of public engagement in implementation of the Common Core. Engagement, though, is not the same as communication alone; it also requires translating the feedback from parents, students, educators and business and civic leaders into reforms, actions and results. That requires a continuous process evaluating what is working and what is not, examining the data and research, and making necessary adjustments in implementation while maintaining fidelity to the overall goal of higher, real-world standards for all students.

Achieve’s Michael Cohen noted in his testimony to the Common Core Implementation Panel that states that sustain education reform for at least a decade “build broad-based, bipartisan coalitions,” “regularly monitor implementation and results,” and “hold firm when necessary and adjust when necessary.”<sup>17</sup>

To achieve these goals, the State should appoint an independent public task force that includes parents, educators, legislators, and business, civic and community leaders to provide ongoing review of Common Core implementation across the state and make public recommendations as needed to replicate successes and address the need for further implementation modifications. This will build trust and confidence, and provide networks of New Yorkers who can assist educators and government leaders in the implementation of the Common Core.

### **Issue 4: Protect student privacy**

#### **Recommendation 4.1: Establish strict data protection and security requirements, while ensuring that appropriate educational and operational data-sharing can occur**

Data is an essential part of enhancing teaching and learning, and implementation of the Common Core has led to a renewed focus on the ways that schools collect and use data for a wide range of functions from academic support to parent engagement to transportation planning.

The Common Core Implementation Panel recognizes two central points about data: first, we cannot turn our back on the use of data to help inform students, parents and educators, which has been occurring in school districts across the state for years; and second, it is imperative that we safeguard all aspects of student data in order to protect personal information and prevent misuse of all kinds.

“It is imperative that we safeguard all aspects of student data in order to protect personal information and prevent misuse.”

In materials provided to the Common Core Implementation Panel, Data Quality Campaign Executive Director Aimee Rogstad Guidera presented six best practices for state data privacy and security policies:

- Statement of the purposes of the state’s privacy policies, including an acknowledgment of the educational value of data and the importance of privacy and security safeguards;
- Selection of a state leader and advisory board responsible for ensuring appropriate privacy and security protections, including for developing and implementing policies and for providing guidance and sharing best practices with schools and districts;
- Establishment of a public data inventory and an understandable description of the specific data elements included in the inventory;

- Strategies for promoting transparency and public knowledge about data use, storage, retention, destruction, and protections;
- Development of statewide policies for governing personally identifiable information; and
- Establishment of a statewide data security plan to address administrative, physical, and technical safeguards.<sup>18</sup>

The Common Core Implementation Panel understands and respects parents’ fears about the privacy of their children’s data, and recognizes concerns about collecting unnecessary or intrusive data. The State should enact laws and policies that establish and/or reinforce strict data protection requirements, including:

- Establishment of a “Parents Bill of Rights for Data Privacy” that includes complete transparency about what data is collected by the State and by school districts, who it is shared with and why;
- Procedures for parent notification in case of any data breach, including by a third-party, and strong penalties for violations;
- Full disclosure of school district privacy procedures to parents; and
- Naming of a Chief Privacy Officer for the State Education Department whose responsibilities include establishing standards for educational agency data security and privacy policies.

The Common Core Implementation Panel does not support a “parent opt-out” of the use of data, which – as educators and data experts explained to the Panel<sup>19</sup> – could place essential academic and operational functions in jeopardy.

#### **Recommendation 4.2: Halt the State’s relationship with inBloom**

Much of the public conversation around data use and privacy has centered around inBloom, which is a national non-profit organization that the State Education Department collaborates with to ultimately provide data tools to parents and teachers. Supporters have defended inBloom as a path to greater data security and to provide much better information to parents who would not otherwise have access to it, while critics have accused the State of opening the door to the unsanctioned use of data by unaccountable third parties.

The debate about this one provider has become a distraction to the successful implementation of the Common Core. The State’s relationship with inBloom should be halted, and State leaders should consider alternative paths to accomplish the goals of increased data transparency and analytics.

## **Conclusion**

New York is at a crossroads. The successful implementation of the Common Core, with the support of teachers and parents, is vital to the future of our state. We cannot and must not let uneven and sometimes poorly executed implementation divert us from realizing a bright and promising future for New York State’s students and citizen. New York can and must address these challenges forthrightly and fairly. Engaging citizens, parents and teachers, providing teachers the time and support to improve implementation, and addressing the public’s concerns, is within our power and capacity to achieve. Our students, our parents, and our educators deserve no less.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Written testimony by Carmel Martin, Center for American Progress.
- <sup>2</sup> Written testimony by the Educational Conference Board.
- <sup>3</sup> Analysis of publicly available data from the State Education Department website, accessed February-March 2014.
- <sup>4</sup> Testimony by Dirk Hightower, Children’s Institute.
- <sup>5</sup> Written testimony by Alice Johnson Cain, TeachPlus.
- <sup>6</sup> Analysis of publicly available data from the State Education Department website, accessed February-March 2014.
- <sup>7</sup> Presentation by Michael Cohen, Achieve.
- <sup>8</sup> Testimony by Pam Allyn, LitLife.
- <sup>9</sup> Written testimony by Carmel Martin, Center for American Progress.
- <sup>10</sup> Presentation by Michael Cohen, Achieve.
- <sup>11</sup> Written testimony by Carmel Martin, Center for American Progress.
- <sup>12</sup> Testimony by Theresa O’Brien, Watervliet Elementary School.
- <sup>13</sup> Testimony by Christina Hundzynski, North Salem Schools.
- <sup>14</sup> Presentation by Susan Neuman, New York University.
- <sup>15</sup> Presentation by Michael Cohen, Achieve.
- <sup>16</sup> Presentation by Christina Hundzynski, North Salem Schools.
- <sup>17</sup> Presentation by Michael Cohen, Achieve.
- <sup>18</sup> Packet provided by Aimee Rogstad Guidera, Data Quality Campaign.
- <sup>19</sup> Testimony by Aimee Rogstad Guidera, Data Quality Campaign, and Charles Dedrick, Capital Region BOCES.

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