



STATE OF NEW YORK
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ANDREW M. CUOMO
GOVERNOR

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DIRECTOR OF STATE OPERATIONS

February 12, 2015

Merryl H. Tisch, Chancellor
New York State Board of Regents
Regents Office
State Education Building
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, N.Y. 12234

Dear Chancellor Tisch,

One of New York's greatest failures has been the persistent state of our failing schools. As you know, there are 178 failing schools in New York State and 77 have been failing for a decade. What's worse is over the past decade more than 250,000 children attended failing schools — and nine out of ten of students in failing schools are minority or poor.

As you know, failing schools lag behind in virtually every category:

- The graduation rate for failing schools is 47.3 percent versus the state average of 76.4 percent.
- ELA proficiency in grades 3-8 at failing schools is 5.9 percent versus the state average of 31.4 percent.
- Math proficiency in grades 3-8 at failing schools is 6.2 percent versus the state average of 35.8 percent.

That is why the Governor adopted your recommendation and proposed a law based on the Massachusetts receivership model with an added provision that these schools become community schools that include wrap around and other services. Recent news reports show that the Massachusetts model is working. In one school the graduation rate has improved from 52 percent to 67 percent and math proficiency has improved from 28 percent to 41 percent. A broad section of education stakeholders have supported the Massachusetts approach, including the American Federation of Teachers President, Randi Weingarten, who supports the model adopted in the Lawrence School District.

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Given the preliminary success in Massachusetts, a similar approach could be transformative in New York. Therefore, we would like the State Education Department to further research the Massachusetts model by performing a comprehensive data and field analysis to see how and why the program is working and the specific measures that are making the model a success.

On behalf of the Governor, we look forward to hearing your results.

Best wishes,



Jim Malatras

Director of State Operations