

**Testimony of the NYC Department of Education
Before the NYC Council Committee on Education
on Breaking the Testing Culture: Examining Multiple Pathways to Determine Student
Mastery**

September 24, 2019

Testimony of Dr. Linda Chen, Chief Academic Officer, NYC Department of Education

Good afternoon Chair Treyger and members of the New York City Council Committee on Education here today. My name is Linda Chen and I serve as the Chief Academic Officer at the Department of Education (DOE). I am joined by Alice Brown, our Senior Executive Director for Policy and Evaluation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We appreciate the opportunity to discuss the critically important issue of ensuring strong instruction in every NYC classroom that is focused on preparing our students for college and careers.

We know that you have called this hearing today due to real concerns about standardized test preparation, and we want to reiterate this administration's focus on a rich, rigorous, joyful, inclusive learning experience for every student. A well-rounded education includes Social Studies and Civics, Science, hands-on and project-based learning opportunities, the arts, Physical Education, social-emotional learning, opportunities to explore and learn from our amazing City – and so much more.

This is the foundation of our Equity and Excellence for All agenda, including Pre-K for All, 3-K for All, Universal Literacy, Computer Science and AP for All, as well as programs focused on college-and-career readiness. We are deepening this work with a systems approach to improve every classroom in every school, including through the Instructional Leadership Framework, our approach to accelerate learning and instruction in every classroom, for every student.

Schools across the city have formed or are forming Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) in order to ensure cohesion and rigor in their school's academic approach. ILTs are composed of school leaders, teachers, and staff, and serve as the driving force in the school to improve instructional practices and student outcomes. This is a common-sense strategy building on this administration's focus on expanding and strengthening professional learning for teachers and building trusting, effective relationships among school staff. Many schools already have ILTs or use a similar approach to instructional leadership, and ongoing supports will be offered this year for those teams. ILTs will examine what is happening in classrooms across a school to ensure all students are engaging in rigorous, authentic, and culturally relevant learning experiences.

Through the Instructional Leadership Framework, schools focus on one of three instructional priority areas:

- Strengthening core instruction;
- Knowing every student well;
- Using a shared and inclusive curriculum.

While I'd be happy to discuss the Instructional Leadership Framework in greater detail, I'd like to speak to one part of this approach, and the focus of this hearing today.

Limited and targeted assessment is a natural part of good instruction. It provides necessary information on the progress students are making toward year-end benchmarks in preparation for future learning. It is important to have multiple stopping points, in multiple ways, throughout the year for teachers to evaluate where their students are on the learning continuum, and what they need to do to continue to help students make progress.

There are two primary types of assessments already in use in New York City schools:

Schools use **formative assessments** to provide teachers across grades and subjects with information about what students know and are able to do in relation to grade-level year-long standard expectations. They can be administered in a variety of ways: paper-pencil booklets, on the computer, or oral conferencing.

Formative Assessments are designed to provide data that can be used for teams of teachers to reflect on past instruction and to plan for tailored supports in upcoming instruction for students based on their current level of performance. Collaborative inquiry and conversation is a significant component of administering formative assessments. Through data and student work analysis, teams of teachers can reflect on and analyze the implementation of their school's curriculum and instruction to assess their effectiveness in providing opportunities for students to develop required grade-level skills, and determine where gaps in instruction exist. It then allows teachers to plan for adjustments or enhancements to their instruction to address those gaps and ensure students are mastering content.

It also provides opportunities for teachers to share the best practices in instruction and the opportunity to collaboratively reflect on accommodations provided to students with special needs and to make adjustments where necessary (i.e., conversations between the general education teacher and the special education teacher).

Outcomes-based assessments are formal assessments that are given on an annual basis to all students in a grade level or a school. Outcomes-based assessments are an indication of overall achievement levels across a school or district or state.

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) requires the DOE to annually administer math and English Language Arts (ELA) tests in grades 3-8, science tests in grades 4 and 8, as well as Regents exams in multiple subject areas that are required for graduation in grades 9-12. The New York State Board of Regents and New York State Education Department also grant some schools a variance to provide a Regents diploma without taking all five required Regents exams, including 46 high schools that belong to the New York Performance Standards Consortium or the Internationals Network. Like all other NYC high schools, these graduates are required to earn 44 distributed credits and pass the Regents ELA exam and for some schools a



**Department of
Education**

Chancellor Richard A. Carranza

math Regents exam. These schools instead administer Performance-Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs) in the other subject areas. The PBATs are written tasks and oral presentations that are reviewed by evaluators external to the school and are graded based on a rubric.

Each year, we produce reports to support schools in utilizing the results from outcomes-based assessments to refine their overall instructional planning for the year. The results from the tests can also be used as one part—but not the primary part—of promotion decisions as well as certain admissions decisions.

New York City and New York State use the results as part of school accountability metrics. In NYC, these exams are included in the School Quality Guide and School Quality Snapshot as only a part of one of seven measures aligned to the Framework for Great Schools, namely Student Achievement. These family-facing resources are provided to help families understand the quality of their schools and include data from a variety of sources, including formal school visits; feedback from students, teachers, and parents from the NYC School Survey; and a variety of student achievement measures. The new state accountability system is comprised of six measures at the elementary/middle level and seven measures at the high school level. At the elementary/middle level four out of six of the measures consider performance on standardized assessments. At the high school level five out of the seven main measures considers performance on standardized assessments. These measures are used by the State Education Department to determine which schools are designated as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools or Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools.

In recent years, we are pleased that the New York State Board of Regents has made improvements to the administration of grades 3-8 math and ELA assessments, including shortening the administration from three days to two days and making these tests untimed so that any student who is productively working will have the time they need to complete the assessment. They have also enacted a moratorium on the required use of these assessments in the evaluation of teachers and principals. We are also closely monitoring the Board of Regents review of graduation requirements through the Blue Ribbon Commission that will be established later this year. The commission will be charged with reconsidering current diploma requirements, ensuring all students have access to multiple graduation pathways, and ensuring a transition timeline to allow districts to prepare for and implement any changes.

The DOE also offers optional outcomes-based assessments to increase College and Career Readiness through the AP for All initiative and College Access for All initiative. The AP for All Initiative is part of Mayor de Blasio's Equity and Excellence agenda, with the goal that all students will have access to at least five AP classes by fall 2021. In 2018, 55,011 students took at least 1 AP exam – a 22 percent increase since 2016. As part of College Access for All, the DOE has provided all juniors with access to the SAT during the school day free of charge. This has led to record high participation. For the Class of 2018, 63,499 students took the SAT at least once in four years of high school. This is 80% of the cohort.



**Department of
Education**
Chancellor Richard A. Carranza

We remain focused on setting and ensuring a high bar for learning, where every student has access to rigorous learning in all content areas and attainment of NYS standards at grade-level and beyond.

Thank you for your partnership and for the opportunity to testify before you today. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have for us.



FOR THE RECORD

**Testimony of the
United Federation of Teachers**

**Submitted to the City Council Committee on Education
Regarding Testing and Alternative Measures of Performance
September 24, 2019**

The United Federation of Teachers wishes to thank Chair Mark Treyger for the opportunity to share our views on testing and alternative measures of performance. On behalf of the 200,000 members of the UFT, we support providing a variety of methods for students to demonstrate mastery of a subject, including tests. Further, we commend your committee for taking the time to review this issue, which affects the future of each student in our classrooms.

As educators, we need to assess where our students are in their knowledge and skills so we can help them to move forward and learn. Testing, including the Regents examinations, is key to that process. It is critical, however, that we keep the stakes of testing reasonable. High stakes testing distorts the learning process by overemphasizing one of its elements.

The UFT has also worked to explore and foster alternative measures for testing student mastery and we support expanding access to alternative assessment methods. There's an equity problem when not all students are being offered the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in a way that is not a Regents exam.

PROSE — which stands for Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence — is an Education Department-UFT contractual program that offers certain New York City schools the ability to alter some of the most basic parameters by which they function. This includes flexibilities that allow them to support their efforts to assess student performance in ways that are beyond standardized tests.

For example, when the PROSE initiative launched, a number of schools from the New York Performance Standards Consortium joined the program. Consortium schools are high schools which have received a waiver from the State Education Department allowing their students to graduate without taking the Regents, with the exception of the English test. Instead, these schools use performance-based assessment tasks. These tasks can include having students make presentations on a given subject before a panel or pursuing project-based learning, which allows students to demonstrate mastery by completing projects on their subjects, much like a doctoral thesis.

The results of the Consortium's methods are promising. Consortium schools have a lower dropout rate than that of regular New York City public schools, according to the Consortium's report, "Redefining Assessment."¹ Four- and six-year graduation rates for all categories of students are higher than for the rest of the city. Graduation rates are roughly 50 percent greater for English language learners and students with disabilities. Eighteen months after students graduate from Consortium high schools, they have an 83 percent college enrollment rate — 24 points higher than the rest of the city. The college enrollment rate for "minority males" is more than double the national average.

Harvest Collegiate High School, for example, is both a PROSE and Consortium school with performance based assessments that are more rigorous than standardized tests, according to Math Teacher John McCrann. The school's 2018 4-year graduation rate was 11 percentage points higher than the citywide average, and its college readiness index was 21 percentage points higher than the citywide average.

Despite these encouraging trends, there are currently only 38 Consortium schools in the city. PROSE has allowed these schools to adjust their schedules and practices to support effective use of performance based assessment tasks (PBATs)—an evaluation method that allows students to do a minimum of PBATs in four subjects (ELA, SS, Math, and Science) and their performance is evaluated according to a rubric created by the Performance Standards Consortium. We need to think of ways to give more students the opportunity to benefit from these kinds of schools.

The state has also created new pathways to graduation. State regulations approved in 2015 and 2016 recognize students' interests in the Arts, Biliteracy, Career and Technical Education, Career Development and Occupational Studies, Humanities, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics by allowing an approved pathway to meet the students' graduation requirements. Under this model, students must take and pass four required Regents Exams or department-approved alternative assessments in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. They must also complete a comparably rigorous pathway to meet the fifth assessment requirement for graduation. Recent data published by the State Education Department on the June graduation rate for the 2014 student cohort shows that 11,200 students across the state earned a diploma through one of these new pathways, an increase of 13 percent over the prior year.

Career and technical education — or CTE — high schools have been another notable success. CTE schools enable students to earn academic and technical credentials at the same time, opening multiple pathways to success. When they graduate, CTE students are equally prepared to pursue a four-year college degree or to immediately enter the world of work. For many students, being able to work part-time in their field while in college allows them to support themselves as they pursue a four-year degree that would have otherwise been out of their financial reach. In 2018, the graduation rate in city schools running CTE programs was 83 percent — beating New York City public schools' all-time high graduation rate of 76 percent that year.

The current system of testing and testing alternatives is a patchwork of city and state policies, which would benefit from a thorough and comprehensive evaluation with the goal of improving equity in education. Far too few students have access to opportunities like Consortium schools and CTE. High-achieving students can use their scores in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs and SAT II tests to supersede certain Regents exams, but what about other students? To ensure equity across the state, we need to increase and access to alternative measures of student performance.

Critically, educators must be a vital part of that process. It is the UFT's core belief that the solutions for schools are to be found within school communities, in the expertise of those who practice our profession.

ⁱ "Redefining Assessment: Data Report on the New York Performance Standards Consortium"
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rhDg-gsYCiLxqpUud0j_hmfNu6qcHwHH/view

**Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Education
RE: Breaking Testing Culture: Evaluating multiple pathways to determine student mastery
September 24, 2019**

My name is Michael Rothman, and I am the founder and executive director of Eskolta School Research and Design, a nonprofit organization that has worked for the last decade with public schools across New York City. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

I wanted to make three points.

The first is that the Regents exams as they now appear are not somehow sacred. When the exams were first put in place, they tested botany and Latin prose. If the exams could never change, we would still be testing that. But they didn't. For a century, they underwent change after change. Then, in 1970, the Board of Regents decided to consolidate the many different forms the exams into what we know today. And since then, little has changed. It's as if since 1970, we have treated the Regents exams as sacred.

And yet, a lot has changed since 1970. In 1970, it would still be five years until the first personal computer was invented. The Internet was still 20 years off.

We recommend that after 49 years, it is high time the Regents reopen and thoroughly reconsider how we assess learning.

The second thing I want you to know is that New York City's students need something different from what the Regents exams promote. Multiple studies in recent years have come out that tell us employers are not looking for the skills that standardized tests emphasize as much as they are looking for work habits and social skills that make people responsible, adaptive, collaborative, and willing to learn. Our democracy needs this too.

For the last 13 years, I have worked with schools that specifically serve students who have been chronically under-served by the system. The vast majority of these students are Black and Latino in low-income neighborhoods, because these are the students that our society have too often failed. Some have to support families and work night jobs, others have been homeless or bullied or left behind in their schools, many never thought they would graduate because they never saw any way out.

When I talk to alumni who have succeeded despite such challenges, they inevitably talk about the same skills employers talk about: they became greater lovers of learning, they learned how to adapt and collaborate. They do not talk about the skills or the knowledge that are on the Regents exams.

We recommend that New York's approaches to assessment be clearly rooted in the skills that students need for the communities, careers, and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy that await them after graduation.

The third thing to know is that there is a better way. Look to what is done in some of our most selective private schools. Instead of repeated grade-level standardized tests, they ask students to study a single topic deeply. Instead of tests that are scored by computers or distant reviewers, projects are presented to a panel of community members. Instead of focusing on memorizing knowledge that is now easily found on the Internet, they focus on students' ability to conduct that research themselves.

We recommend that the assessments of student growth by the Board of Regents take on characteristics to be designed by educators in collaboration with community stakeholders to include real-life skills for deeper learning.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today. I am happy to take any questions.

TESTIMONY ON *BREAKING TESTING CULTURE*

CITY COUNCIL HEARING 9/24/2019

KEMALA KARMEN kemala@nycpublic.org | 917-807-9969

Good afternoon. My name is Kemala Karmen. I am a co-founder of the no-budget, grassroots group NYC Opt Out. NYC Opt Out is one of the constituent organizations of New York State Allies for Public Education (NYSAPE) and I serve on NYSAPE's steering committee. That said, my testimony today is mostly from my personal perspective as a parent of children in this city's public schools.

The email I received inviting me here today announced that this hearing would be about "Breaking Testing Culture." So one of the first things we might want to ask ourselves is *what would our schools look like if we successfully broke that culture?*

Fortunately, I don't have to think very hard in order to answer this question because both of my children have attended non-test-centric schools from pre-K all the way through high school. I realize that our family's experience is extremely rare in the public schools of New York City--or even in the state or the country as a whole--but it also means that if we want to "break testing culture" we don't have to scabble about searching for some elusive key to solving this problem. We have a handful of schools that have already broken it and can serve as models.

So, how is it that these schools can have been liberated from testing culture when most schools have not? It's a combination of state regulation and parent voice and the NYCDOE can, contrary to first impressions, boost both of these necessary prerequisites. Let's start with the state. My children from 6th grade on attended one of the schools in the New York Performance Assessment Consortium. These schools, about 40 altogether, have a waiver from the state which exempts students from having to take all but the ELA Regents exam in order to graduate high school.

In lieu of the Regents (with the exception of the ELA) Consortium students conduct original research or analyses on topics of their choice (within guidelines) which they write up and defend before a panel of evaluators. I'll be honest; this isn't easy. It demands a lot of the teachers and the students. At one point my older child groused that if she were taking the history Regents exam, she'd just take it and be done already. Instead, she conducted research and built her argument over months, at one point taping index cards about her topic, the history of governmental regulation of the opioid industry, all over our living room walls. She spent more time writing, revising, and then preparing her presentation and practicing its delivery. While this wasn't always fun for her, I think the knowledge and skills she derived are deep and useful. She's been at college for one month now and reports that when it comes to writing and presenting she has less trepidation and is more prepared than her classmates. Her experience aligns with broader surveys of Consortium students; they are successful at entering and persisting in college even when controlling for race, income, etc.

While the state controls how many schools are in the Consortium, I might ask what is the city doing to use its muscle--we have the majority of the state's students after all--to push for either further expanding the Consortium or in other ways securing Regents waivers for the city's students?

Unfortunately, waivers only exist for high school grades, in part because the standardized testing in grades 3-8 is federally mandated. Here's where parent voice comes in. My kids were able to attend elementary and middle schools that did ZERO test prep because the parents in those schools overwhelmingly rejected high-stakes testing in favor of more holistic teacher-created assessments. How did they do this? They opted out of the state tests. Are these parents just outliers? I would say no. They were able to organize because administrators at these schools did not try to hold them back. It seems that there are very few of these administrators. Why might this be? Does the DOE punish or reward principals based on the test scores of their students? Are superintendents similarly incentivized or disincentivized regarding the test scores of the schools in their charge?

At NYC Opt Out, the majority of the calls that come into our hotline are from parents saying that principals are trying to coerce them into taking the tests by, say, threatening summer school or holding their kids back. This is wrong, but not really that surprising when NYCDOE, to the extent that it addresses opt out at all, states that parents who want to opt out "should meet with the principal." Why? If opt out is a right, which it is, as was clarified in a joint message from the Ed Commissioner and the Chancellor of the Board of Regents, why do parents need to meet with the principal, if not so that the principal can try to dissuade them from their purpose? People shouldn't need to ask permission to exercise what is an acknowledged right. Fortunately, I am pretty empowered and will seize my rights, but so many of the parents in this system aren't and you can see how a policy like "meet the principal" would intimidate many parents, especially those who don't speak English or whose own experiences of school were traumatic. NYCDOE should emulate what some other school districts do: backpack home a form where parents can simply check off, "YES, my student will take this test" or "NO, my student will not take this assessment."

**Testimony of the New York Civil Liberties Union before
The New York City Council Committee on Education:**

**“Breaking Testing Culture: Evaluating multiple pathways to determine
student mastery”**

September 24, 2019



ACLU of New York

125 Broad Street
19th Floor
New York NY 10004
(212) 607-3300
nyclu.org

Donna Lieberman
Executive Director

Robin Willner
President

The New York Civil Liberties Union (“NYCLU”) respectfully submits the following testimony on the harms of and alternatives to testing culture in New York City schools. We would like to thank the Committee on Education for giving us the opportunity to provide testimony today on this important topic.

The value and utility of making important education decisions about children and teachers based on a single (or even a series of) standardized tests is more than a question of pedagogical preference. It is an urgent civil rights issue, driving some of the deepest and most racially unjust wedges in our system of public education. In New York City, the education philosophy of former Mayor Bloomberg and past federal education policy—adding more tests and relying on them for more high-stakes decisions—has contributed to extreme segregation, especially in our most coveted programs.

The 2014 report by the Civil Rights Project at UCLA, *New York State’s Extreme School Segregation*, states “New York’s record on school segregation by race and poverty is dismal now and has been for a very long time... A great center of American liberalism, New York seemed to turn away when race issues came close to home.”¹ Indeed, it is time for New York to take bold and concrete action to meaningfully and purposely integrate our schools. And this cannot happen without a hard look at our testing culture.

I. Introduction

The NYCLU, the state affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union, is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization with nine offices across New York state and more than 210,000 members and supporters. The NYCLU’s mission is to defend and promote the fundamental principles, rights, and constitutional values embodied in the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of the State of New York, with particular attention to addressing the pervasive and persistent harms of racism.

The NYCLU founded the Education Policy Center in 2018 to bring a civil rights and civil liberties analysis to institutions that serve young people, and to ensure our public schools are living up to their promise as incubators of democracy. One of the strategic priorities of the Education Policy Center is to tackle the practices and policies that have led New York schools to become the most segregated in the nation. High stakes testing—and the overreliance on testing to make education decisions—is a major contributor.

The NYCLU has always recognized that education is a cornerstone of democracy. As such, we believe education should be publicly funded and accountable, provide school environments that are safe, supportive and dignifying for all students, are rooted in pedagogy that promotes critical thinking and is factually accurate, age-appropriate and free from bias, that create equitable opportunities for all students, and that promote relationship- and community-building.

High-stakes testing represents the opposite of this vision. Our school system's overreliance on testing creates unnecessary challenges for students, teachers, and schools without adding educational value. High stakes testing negatively impacts schools and students in almost every way, including:



ACLU of New York

125 Broad Street
19th Floor
New York NY 10004
(212) 607-3300
nyclu.org

Donna Lieberman
Executive Director

Robin Willner
President

- **Narrowing the curriculum:** Purporting to measure the quality of schools (and teachers¹) by looking solely at test scores has led to a forced narrowing of the curriculum, reducing teachers' job satisfaction and students' access to meaningful content.² It leaves virtually no class time for culturally responsive or inquiry-based education, or for lessons on subjects that aren't tested, such as civics, sexuality and health education, physical education, and the arts.³ It fails to capture kids' attention or their imagination, making class boring or frustrating and contributing to misbehavior.⁴
- **Separating and tracking students:** Test scores are used to separate and segregate NYC students into Gifted and Talented programs before they are even in Kindergarten. This tracking has contributed to our city being home to the most racially segregated schools in the nation, and it means students of color miss out on the best programs before they've even started school. Our convoluted middle school admissions system uses elementary students' test scores to funnel kids into excellent, good, and struggling programs. The Specialized High School Admissions Test ("SHSAT") and 7th-grade exam scores are used to further segregate students in high school. Inside schools, even those with diverse student bodies, test scores are used to determine access to Advanced Placement and Honors courses, college- and Regents- prep courses, and many other programs that can boost kids into higher achievement.⁵
- **Harming students with disabilities and those for whom English is not a first language:**⁶ Data indicates that students with disabilities fail standardized tests at higher rates than their peers.⁷ This is often a result of them not having access to the same curriculum, but can also be attributed to particular disabilities being incompatible with the testing methods. Rather than take an exam they know they are likely to fail, many students with learning and other disabilities simply drop out of school.⁸ Likewise, for students who are Multilingual Learners (MLL), high stakes tests can present an impenetrable barrier, due to lack of access to the same curriculum, and language mastery factors.⁹
- **Harming teachers:** Research has demonstrated that new NYC teachers reported that "teaching to the test" stifled their creativity, individuality, and

¹ Under a 2019 state law, school districts will have the option to include student test scores as part of teachers' evaluations, pursuant to collective bargaining agreements. 2019 N.Y. Laws Chap. 27.

autonomy.¹⁰ Teachers in these regimes said it was harder to connect with students and build relationships, an essential component of classroom management and teacher job satisfaction. High stakes testing also discourages teachers from investing in special needs and other children who won't score well on the test.

- **Incentivizing ways to game the system:** When the stakes are high, people will use whatever tools they can access to ensure their children make the cut. We hear often about more affluent families spending thousands on test preparation courses and tutors, beginning in preschool. There has also been widespread coverage of cheating scandals where educators inflate exam scores to save their schools and students from being seen as “failing.”¹¹ Less understood are the myriad ways, short of cheating, that families of means ensure their children succeed on tests. For example, of the students given extra time to take the SHSAT under a 504 disability designation, 42 percent are white, and those students are far more likely to receive an offer of admission.¹²
- **Correlating intelligence with test performance:** Studies have demonstrated that high stakes tests are better at measuring a student's socioeconomic status than her knowledge.¹³ Of the dozens of tests NYC students will be expected to take in their school career, nearly all have been criticized at some point for content errors, language bias, and predictive validity.¹⁴ Supposedly objective, the tests are beset by subjectivity: they are learnable through expensive private test-prep¹⁵, students are drilled on the content through curriculum-narrowing, and test results are used inappropriately as measures for which they have not been validated.



125 Broad Street
19th Floor
New York NY 10004
(212) 607-3300
nyclu.org

Donna Lieberman
Executive Director

Robin Willner
President

II. School Segregation in New York City

Forty-five percent of neighborhood elementary schools in New York City are more than 90 percent black and Latino.¹⁶ One in eight NYC kindergarten classes is racially homogenous, meaning 90 percent or more of the students are of the same race or ethnicity.¹⁷ And, according to the Civil Rights Project, 73 percent of charter schools across New York City were considered “apartheid schools” in 2014, in which less than one percent of the students were white.¹⁸

Brown v. Board of Education concluded that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal, and despite Civil Rights-era victories in the movement to integrate schools, the last several decades have seen the broad re-segregation of our nation's schools.¹⁹ Expiration of consent decrees mandating integration, strategic disinvestment in Black and brown neighborhoods, funneling of public dollars to private institutions, and gentrification all contribute to continued separate and unequal education.

High stakes testing is an additional piece of this system. Despite obvious data showing the racially isolating impact, we permit tests to funnel children into or out of gifted programs, Regents, Advanced Placement and honors classes, and exceptional schools such as NYC's specialized high schools. In New York State, one of a minority of states that still requires a graduation exam, a single test can even deny students a high school diploma.

Segregation aims not just to maintain physical separation, but to isolate people of color from power, opportunity, and the ability to fully and equally participate in the democratic process. Consider that, although white students comprise just 15 percent of the New York City public school population, sixty percent of white students attend schools where white students are more than double their system-wide percentage.²⁰ These schools are disproportionately better resourced than schools serving students of color in racially isolated schools. It is, therefore, no accident that students of color who attend racially isolated schools have lower academic outcomes, lower graduation rates, and are less likely to graduate from college.²¹

Racially integrated schools—including all the programs inside the schools—are our best opportunity to break the cycle of purposeful discrimination and disadvantage. Even though some of the systems that created our deep racial isolation—including discriminatory housing and economic practices—extend beyond the reach of the Department of Education (“DOE”), segregation today is perpetuated and worsened by the failure to implement and maintain deliberate system-wide policies to integrate the schools.²² The DOE has, therefore, an urgent obligation to act decisively to remedy the segregation in its school system. This includes a serious examination of the ways reliance on testing creates and reinforces segregation, even inside otherwise-diverse school buildings.

III. New York City’s Specialized High Schools

While New York City’s specialized high schools serve only a small fraction of students in the system, they have become an embarrassing symbol of our city’s inability to confront segregation. And while a serious effort to integrate these schools would not make a difference for the majority of kids, it would accomplish two important things. First, eliminating the state law that keeps these schools segregated by limiting admission to the results of a single exam would ensure that the most academically promising kids from every middle school have a fair shot at attending what are considered the top public high schools in the country.²³ Second, it would send a powerful message across our state, and even the nation, that exceptional education does not require rote learning, mastering test-taking techniques, or spending a fortune to prepare for an exam.

One very small step already taken by the DOE was to expand the Discovery Program, an attempt to slightly increase the opportunities for students from low-income families who attend under-resourced middle schools to make it into the Specialized High Schools. But to qualify, students must still do well on the SHSAT, which is required by state law for admission to several of the specialized schools.

In the absence of a change in New York State law that would allow three of the Specialized High Schools to implement a fairer and more educationally-sound admissions policy—one that does not rely entirely on a single, standardized test—the Discovery Program is one of the City’s only ways to address the stark racial disparities in admission to the Specialized High Schools.

It’s important to recognize the Discovery Program expansion for what it is: a single step. We must not only enable more equitable access to the top schools in the City, but also continue tirelessly fighting to promote diversity and equality in our public schools across the board.

NYCLU

ACLU of New York

125 Broad Street
19th Floor
New York NY 10004
(212) 607-3300
nyclu.org

Donna Lieberman
Executive Director

Robin Willner
President

i. **Introduction 1541**

Council Intro 1541 would create a “specialized high school task force” to address the racial and ethnic inequalities in the student bodies of the test-based specialized high schools.²⁴ The task force would include representatives from the DOE, teachers, students, parents, and experts in certain subject matters. It would meet monthly and hold quarterly public hearings and would submit a report on its findings regarding “alternative admissions criteria for the specialized high schools.”

While the NYCLU supports the creation of this task force and efforts to change the admissions processes at the Specialized High Schools, there may be considerable overlap with the existing School Diversity Advisory Group. We recommend that the Council to consider whether there is significant difference in these bodies, in mandate and composition, to necessitate separate entities. We would also urge the inclusion of legal and civil rights advocates to the composition of the task force to bring a valuable perspective and expertise to the discussion.

IV. Gifted and Talented Programs

Prior to the 2007-2008 school year, Community School Districts were able to utilize a holistic system for evaluating admissions to neighborhood gifted and talented (“G&T”) programs that included teacher evaluations, classroom observations, and in-district exam scores. That year, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein eliminated the holistic admissions model, replacing it with a single standardized test, under the auspices of making the system more equitable. In order to gain admission into a district G&T program, children as young as four years old had to achieve a score on this exam that was in the nationwide 90th-percentile. Essentially overnight, there was a catastrophic drop in the number of Black and Latinx children admitted to these programs, from 31 percent Black students in 2007 to 13 percent Black students in 2008.²⁵ The children who did well on the tests often had access to expensive prep courses and private preschools.

Our City’s extremely racially-segregated housing patterns multiplied the effects of this change to admissions. In districts where too few children scored high enough, G&T programs were eliminated, so even if children did qualify they would have to travel across neighborhoods or even boroughs in order to enroll. This domino effect meant that some districts in the Bronx and Central Brooklyn, for example, had no G&T programs, reducing parents’ familiarity with the programs and knowledge of how to apply, even if they would be willing to send their kids to a school across town. And parents’ understandable unwillingness to send their young kids to faraway schools meant that surviving G&T programs became less and less diverse.²⁶

Today, more than 75 percent of students in G&T programs are white or Asian.²⁷ Again, this racial segregation in advanced academic programs is unacceptable. The NYCLU supports the recommendation of the School Diversity Advisory Group to end the use of high-stakes admission exams in this context and phase out our current, racially isolated system. There is also compelling data that a return to a broader set of assessments, involving teacher recommendations and psychological profiling, would fail to integrate G&T programs. Simply put, expanding the number of G&T programs only serves to expand segregation to more districts.²⁸



ACLU of New York

125 Broad Street
19th Floor
New York NY 10004
(212) 607-3300
nyclu.org

Donna Lieberman
Executive Director

Robin Willner
President

This is not to say we should reduce students' access to rigorous, challenging, or enriched curriculum. It is not only possible but beneficial to move away from a system where children are labeled and sorted into cohorts, into one where each student's individual needs are met and her talents cultivated. Many states and districts around the country have successfully adopted a system of individualized education plans to meet the needs of academically-promising children in a mainstreamed environment.²⁹ Indeed, an individualized system of providing gifted education makes room for enhancements in any area where a kid excels, whether in math, reading, science, or the arts, without discounting that he may struggle in other subjects, or even have a disability.³⁰

V. Recommendations

Fortunately, there are alternatives to testing that are proven to work, meeting kids' needs, achieving exceptional education, and fostering meaningful curriculum and healthy relationships between students and teachers. In New York City, we can look to the Performance Standards Consortium, a group of dedicated teachers and school leaders who have piloted a better way to teach and to measure students' mastery of the material. Consortium schools allow students to demonstrate their grasp of a subject through portfolios and projects—research papers, experiments, and in-depth discussions—rather than taking the Regents Exams. They are permitted to do this through a waiver granted by the state Education Commissioner.³¹ We recommend the City Council, working closely with the experts at the Consortium, explore ways to protect and even expand the waiver to new schools that are equipped to adopt similar strategies.

There are other local success stories as well. In 2017, District 8 in the Bronx began offering enriched curriculum to all students, not just those who qualify for a designated G&T program, and demonstrated benefits across their student body.³² The education professor who designed the curriculum used in D8 said the main tenets were engagement, enthusiasm, and enjoyment, which in turn supported deep, inquiry-based learning because children were excited to be in school. We recommend the Council work with the DOE to explore ways to provide enriched and advanced curriculum to all students, using an inquiry-based model, rather than having to identify and label kids.

Finally, we urge the Council, and New York City officials, to become involved in the State's Task Force examining the continued use of the Regents Exam graduation requirement. We believe that removing the Regents as a requirement for high school graduation will bring a diploma in-reach for many kids who would otherwise fail or drop out. California recently dropped its high school exit exam, and New York should study their experience, as well as data from the majority of states with no exit exam requirement, to make high school graduation a more achievable and less arbitrary measure.

¹ John Kucsera and Gary Orfield, *New York State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction, and a Damaged Future*, UCLA Civil Rights Project, March 2014, p. viii, available at <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integrat...>



ACLU of New York

125 Broad Street
19th Floor
New York NY 10004
(212) 607-3300
nyclu.org

Donna Lieberman
Executive Director

Robin Willner
President



ACLU of New York

125 Broad Street
19th Floor
New York NY 10004
(212) 607-3300
nyclu.org

Donna Lieberman
Executive Director

Robin Willner
President

² Valerie Strauss, "U.S. teachers' job satisfaction craters- report," The Washington Post, February 21, 2013, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/02/21/u-s-teachers-job-satisfaction-craters-report/>

³ Andrea Gabor, "Bring Back High School Civics, With a Twist," available at <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-09-17/high-school-civics-is-on-the-way-back-with-a-twist>

⁴ Valerie Strauss, "13 ways high-stakes standardized tests hurt students," The Washington Post, March 11, 2014, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/03/10/13-ways-high-stakes-standardized-tests-hurt-students/>

⁵ Lena V. Groeger, Annie Waldman, and David Eads, *Miseducation: Is There Racial Inequality at Your School?*, ProPublica, October 16, 2018, available at <https://projects.propublica.org/miseducation/>; Halley Potter, *Integrating Classrooms and Reducing Academic Tracking*, The Century Foundation, available at <https://tcf.org/content/report/integrating-classrooms-reducing-academic-tracking-strategies-school-leaders-educators/?agreed=1>

⁶ Cindy Long, "High-Stakes Testing for Disabled Students: A System 'Gone Horribly Wrong,'" National Education Association Today, March 5, 2014, available at <http://neatoday.org/2014/03/05/high-stakes-testing-for-disabled-students-a-system-gone-horribly-wrong/>

⁷ "Implications of High-Stakes Testing for Students With Learning Disabilities," GreatSchools, April 2, 2015, available at <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/high-stakes-testing-learning-disabilities/>

⁸ The National Center for Fair and Open Testing, *Standardized Testing and Students with Disabilities*, March 20, 2017, available at <https://www.fairtest.org/standardized-testing-and-students-disabilities>

⁹ José Luis Vilson, "How common core hurts English language learners," The Progressive, September 8, 2015, available at <https://progressive.org/public-school-shakedown/common-core-hurts-english-language-learners/>

¹⁰ Margaret Crocco and Arthur Costigan, *The Narrowing of Curriculum and Pedagogy in the Age of Accountability Urban Educators Speak Out*, Urban Education, November 2007, URBAN EDUC. 42. 10.1177/0042085907304964, pg. 512-535.

¹¹ Sharon Nichols and David Berliner, *The Inevitable Corruption of Indicators and Educators Through High-Stakes Testing*, Arizona State University Education Policy Studies Laboratory, March 2005, available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED508483.pdf>

¹² Kevin Quealy and Eliza Shapiro, "Some Students Get Extra Time for New York's Elite High School Entrance Exam. 42% Are White," The New York Times, June 17, 2019, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/17/upshot/nyc-schools-shsat-504.html>

¹³ Zachary Goldfarb, "These four charts show how the SAT favors rich, educated families," The Washington Post, March 5, 2014, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/03/05/these-four-charts-show-how-the-sat-favors-the-rich-educated-families/>

¹⁴ See, e.g. Geoff Decker, "'Hare and Pineapple' test item scrapped amid media attention," Chalkbeat, April 20, 2012, available at <https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2012/04/20/pineapple-test-question-scrapped-for-media-attention/#.VTgWCZTF-hI>; Winnie Hu, "Does Admissions Exam for Elite High Schools Measure Up? No One Knows," The New York Times, available at

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/18/nyregion/shsat-new-york-city-schools.html?module=inline>; "Tests & Assessments," National Association for Gifted Children, available at <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/gifted-education-practices/identification/tests-assessments>; Valerie Strauss, "Pearson flubs test scoring for gifted-and-talented programs," The Washington Post, April 22, 2013, available at

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/04/22/pearson-flubs-test-scoring-for-gifted-and-talented-programs/>; Christina Veiga, "A potential Regents question refers to 'illegal aliens.' A petition says that's racist," Chalkbeat, September 18, 2019 <https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2019/09/18/a-potential-regents-question-refers-to-illegal-aliens-a-petition-says-thats-racist/>; Valerie Strauss, "Millions of kids take standardized tests simply to help testing companies make better tests. (Really.)" The Washington Post, June 7, 2019, available at

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/06/07/millions-kids-take-standardized-tests-simply-help-testing-companies-make-better-tests-really/>; Valerie Strauss, "Why one testing expert says New York state's ever-changing standardized testing program is 'useless,'" The Washington Post, April 9, 2019, available at

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/04/09/why-one-testing-expert-says-new-york-states-ever-changing-standardized-testing-program-is-useless/>

¹⁵ See, e.g. Jennifer Senior, "The Junior Meritocracy," New York Magazine, January 29, 2010, available at <http://nymag.com/news/features/63427/>; "How to Prepare for the Gifted And Talented Test," available at

<http://www.getyourchildintogat.com/p/top-10-list-for-gifted-and-talented.html>; “Test Preparation: NYC Gifted & Talented Exam,” available at <https://catestutoring.com/test-preparation/nyc-gifted-talented-exam/>;

¹⁶ Clara Hemphill and Nicole Mader, *Segregated Schools in Integrated Neighborhoods: The city’s schools are even more divided than our housing*, available at <http://www.centernyc.org/segregatedschools/>.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Harris, “Racial Segregation in New York Schools Begins in Pre-K, Report Finds,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 20, 2016, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/21/nyregion/racial-segregation-in-new-yo...>

¹⁸ John Kucsera and Gary Orfield, *New York State’s Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction, and a Damaged Future*, UCLA Civil Rights Project, March 2014, p. viii, available at <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integrat...>

¹⁹ *Brown v. Board of Educ. of Topeka, Shawnee Cnty., KS*, 347 U.S. 483, 493 (1954).

²⁰ New York City Department of Education Demographic Snapshot, 2017-2018, available at <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports-and-policies/citywide-information-and-data/information-and-data-overview>

²¹ Brief of 553 Social Scientists as Amici Curiae in Support of Respondents, at 6-12, *Parents Involved in Cmty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, et al.*, 551 U.S. 701 (2007) (Nos. 05-908, 05-915).

²² John Kucsera and Gary Orfield, *New York State’s Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction, and a Damaged Future*, UCLA Civil Rights Project, March 2014, pp. 19-24, available at <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/ny-norfler-report-placeholder/Kucsera-New-York-Extreme-Segregation-2014.pdf>

²³ 1971 N.Y. Laws Chap. 1212; *See also*, Jim Dwyer, “Decades Ago, New York Dug a Moat Around Its Specialized Schools,” *The New York Times*, June 8, 2018, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/08/nyregion/about-shsat-specialized-high-schools-test.html>

²⁴ New York City Council, *Introduction 15410-2019*, available at <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=690910&GUID=B1E34E6C-43EF-4824-9C1E-3C4A6564195A&Options=&Search=>

²⁵ Elissa Gootman and Robert Gebeloff, “Fewer Children Entering Gifted Programs,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 29, 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/30/nyregion/30gifted.html>; *see also* Elissa Gootman and Robert Gebeloff, “Gifted Programs in the City Are Less Diverse,” *The New York Times*, June 19, 2008, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/19/nyregion/19gifted.html>.

²⁶ Blue Telusma, “Majority minority NYC schools offer fewest programs for gifted and talented children,” *The Grio*, April 8, 2019, available at <https://thegrio.com/2019/04/08/new-york-schools-gifted-programs-black-hispanic/>

²⁷ Philissa Cramer, “As New York City makes limited change to gifted programs, the regular admissions process yields predictable results,” *Chalkbeat*, April 16, 2019, available at <https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2019/04/16/as-new-york-city-makes-limited-changes-to-gifted-programs-the-regular-admissions-process-yields-predictable-results/>; *see also* Amy Zimmer and Nigel Chiwaya, “See How Racial Segregation Persists at Gifted and Talented Programs,” *DNA Info* September 29, 2015, available at <https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20150929/upper-west-side/map-see-how-racial-segregation-persists-at-gifted-talented-programs>.

²⁸ Allison Roda, *Gifted and Talented Programs are Not the Path to Equity*, the Century Foundation, June 2019.

²⁹ *See, e.g.* Florida (available at <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/0070110-p-gifted.pdf>); Maryland (available at <http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Gifted-Talented/Top10GT2017.pdf>); Pennsylvania (available at <https://www.giftedpage.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Parents-Guide.pdf>)

³⁰ *See JD ex rel. JD v. Pawlett School District*, 224 F.3d 60 (2d Cir. 2000), where the court held that because a student was identified as gifted, he was not entitled to special education services under the IDEA.

³¹ The New York Performance Standards Consortium, available at <http://www.performanceassessment.org/>

³² Amy Zimmer, “Gifted Programs Ditched for Hands-On Learning for All at More NYC Schools,” *DNA Info*, June 13, 2017, available at https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20170613/hunts-point/schoolwide-enrichment-model-gifted-and-talented-renzulli/?utm_content=bufferfc620&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=DNAinfoNY

NYCLU

ACLU of New York

125 Broad Street
19th Floor
New York NY 10004
(212) 607-3300
nyclu.org

Donna Lieberman
Executive Director

Robin Willner
President

Testimony before the New York City Council Hearing on Breaking Testing Culture
Jennifer Gaboury, Hunter College, CUNY

Thank you very much Chairperson Treyger and members of the committee for holding this important, long overdue hearing.

I'm the parent of a child who just entered PreK and who will be opting him out of tests if we have not yet smashed this regime, but I'm here to offer testimony and as someone who teaches and assesses college students. I teach at Hunter College in the Depts of Gender Studies and Political Science. I've also been a long time participant in CUNY-wide committee work on improving modes of assessment across the university system. Most of the classes I teach are populated by students taking general ed classes for graduation and so I see students across a wide range abilities. I have considerable student loan debt and so I teach additional classes in the summer terms; what that means is that about a third of my summer students tend to come from fancy private institutions when they come home and take a class in the summer. Among undergrads, I'm seeing a whole lot.

[As I expect has already been said] one of the things that remains is inexcusable about regimes of high stakes testing (and I mean the full range of tests from G&T testing of 4 year olds to those in 3rd to 8th grade, to the SATs and AP exams, to the GRE and LSAT exams, et cetera) is that the research on their negative, corrosive impact on both pedagogy and learning is clear. It says that tests not effective, accurate measures a student's abilities. High stakes tests are political instruments and when you dig into the material, it's shocking the ways in they chug along, continuing to operate in opposition to the overwhelming preponderance of research on learning says we should be doing things differently. Among ed folks, you can increasingly go online and see this compared to the climate change debate in terms of the kinds of consensus that exists.

College professors are regularly frustrated b/c we don't possess time machines and can't go back and try to fix what's preventing students from metabolizing and then **engaging** material that's in front of them. And it turns out this matches criticism of learning in high stakes testing environments where studies demonstrate they produce "fragmented" forms of knowledge and "lower level learning."

We see students having particular difficulty with argumentation, modes of higher analysis, collaborative/extemporaneous work, and verbal participation. Students also treat particular forms of information as disposable; they have a hard time holding onto, recalling, or reintegrating it at a later date. Notoriously in Political Science, students often cannot remember things like when in the US Civil War – and that is in part b/c it is being taught to them in a framework where they are taught to identify, regurgitate, and toss that away – rather than internalize it as a concept. Within studies of how people learn, this isn't particularly complicated why this is happening. (I'm talking here about students who have done well, scored a 4 or 5, on a US History AP exam.)

These measurements perpetuate a lulling false reassurance, fake certainty, or, worse, spurious punishment that are hard for some to give up – especially if they are the winners in this narrow system. Everyone is being robbed b/c high stakes tests distracting us from what we should be doing. So then there is the question that is raised in conversations among parents and politicians (not people in education) – how can we know how students are faring and if they are being promoted appropriately?

I come before you as a teacher who is trusted to teach and assess students to say that's what we must do. Trust educators to build rigorous, beautiful, research informed system. The tests we are using have nothing on the kinds of rubrics that teachers are capable of assembling to assess student learning – they are more demanding and provide not just a much better picture – but an actual picture. I know that because I get to do that in my own job. Believe in teachers, invest in teachers, assess those teachers, and support them in doing this work.

My name is Susan Horwitz. I'm the supervising attorney of the Legal Aid Society Civil Practice Education Law Project. I testify today, however, as a parent of two young men, ages 18 and 20, with vastly different public high school experiences that illustrate the wisdom and necessity of breaking the testing culture.

My younger child just graduated from East Side Community High School. East Side is a PBAT school, where at the end of every semester from sixth through twelfth grade, students must participate in a "Roundtable" for core subjects. At most Roundtables, students sit in small groups, present a project or paper that they've prepared, and answer on-the-fly questions. They are graded by adults who are teachers from other grades, other schools, or otherwise have knowledge about the subject, using a rubric that assesses both process and content skills.

Assessments can be individualized to accommodate students' needs, and only one Regents exam – ELA – must be passed to complete graduation requirements. To put it mildly, my son was well prepared for college and is in his first semester at Temple University. In fact, he just described his history of race and diversity in America course as "just like" his senior year class on social justice. Did he need a US history Regents exam to ensure that he was ready for college? No. Does utilizing a performance based assessment system reduce the "rigor" of instruction? No – in fact compared to memorizing information required to pass a standardized exam, PBAT is much more work and far more difficult.

At the opposite extreme, my older child is, at 20, finishing his last few high school credits at the New York Harbor School. He is really smart, yet extraordinarily learning disabled; struggled with health issues that kept him out of school for two years as a teen, and he attended public, private special education, and non-public schools from third through eighth grade. From the start, we knew that he was not a typical student. He will never be able to pass a Regents level test, and

as a result, until the Board of Regents developed the superintendent determination pathway, his chance of getting a high school diploma was nonexistent. This was a very tough pill for me to swallow. At Harbor, he has learned welding and marine technology; volunteered for just about every school-based event; and become a member of an incredible community that values dedication, resilience, and hard work as much as high academic achievement. This is how it should be. I was hoping to bring him here today, but he's working at his deckhand job on a charter sailboat, the first in what we know will be a successful career in the maritime industry. Does he want or need to go to college? No. Does he work harder than many young people his age? Yes -- because he's been allowed to focus on succeeding at the one thing he's always wanted to do: work on the water.

All students in NYC high schools need to have the opportunities that my kids have had, to be valued for what they know and how they show it. It can't just depend on enlightened principals like Mark Federman and Jeff Chetirko. I urge you to support the Regents shift away from the culture of testing.

Susan Horwitz
160 East 3rd St., 1i
New York, NY 10009
9179727060
witznyc@gmail.com



Class Size Matters
124 Waverly Pl., New York, NY 10011
Phone: 212-529-3539
info@classsizematters.org
www.classsizematters.org

Testimony on high-stakes testing before the NYC Education Committee

September 24, 2019

Thank you, Chair Treyger for holding these important hearings and for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Emily Carrazana, I work at Class Size Matters and I attended public elementary and middle schools in the Bronx. Beginning in the 6th grade, I would trek up to Bronx Science two or three days a week, and for most of my summers to participate in the Dream/Specialized High School Institute (SHSI), a program designed to help prepare low income and high achieving students for the SHSAT.

After many hours of sacrificed time out of my childhood, I did not get into any of the specialized high schools, despite my good grades and high scores on the state exams. My parents, first generation immigrants, did not know the first thing about the bureaucratic process that is the complex high school admissions process in this city. So, when I was rejected from the specialized high schools, they did the only thing they thought they could do.

They moved our entire family out of the state to neighboring New Jersey. I ended up graduating from my town's public high school, successfully completing AP and International Baccalaureate courses and went on to earn my bachelor's degrees from Rutgers in three years. My results on the SHSAT were no indication of where my abilities stood back in the 8th grade, just as they are not a valid marker for success for any student today.

While many people argue that eliminating this exam and/or gifted programs will cause the families of high-achieving students to move out of the city, the example of my family shows how the opposite happens currently because of the use of an unfair high-stakes exam – which has been shown not only to discriminate against students of color but also high-achieving girls.

The SHSAT is an invalid and biased exam. While nearly all of the discussion and debate has so far revolved around the way in which it leads to racial disparities, this exam has also been shown conclusively to be highly gender-biased. Though NYC girls receive higher test scores on the state exams and better grades, they are accepted into the specialized high schools at much lower rates. Here are last year's results by gender, revealing a gender gap of eight percentage points.¹

¹ <https://nycpublicschoolparents.blogspot.com/2019/03/dismal-results-and-gender-bias-remains.html>

Gender	#stud tested	% students tested	#got offer	% of total offers
F	14,116	51%	2,206	46%
M	13,405	49%	2,592	54%
Total	27,521	100%	4,798	100%

The disparity at the most selective schools such as Stuyvesant is even greater. Last year, 56% of those admitted to Stuyvesant were boys and only 44% were girls.²

The fact that the SHSAT is biased against girls has been conclusively proven by Jon Taylor, a research analyst at Hunter College, who has published his research findings in a peer-reviewed journal.³ He discovered that girls who are admitted to the specialized high schools with the same test scores as boys do better on their course work and receive higher grades, including in the most advanced courses.⁴ His research also shows that a student's 7th grade point average is the most valid predictive factor for success at New York City high schools in general, including the Specialized High Schools.⁵ This merely underscores the need to eliminate the SHSAT as the sole determinant for admissions to a NYC school.

We oppose the use of high-stakes testing in general and the SHSAT in particular. No other school district in the country bases admissions to any one of their schools on the basis of one test alone.⁶ Moreover, this practice has long been opposed by the American Psychological Association, the National Council on Measurement in Education, and the American Education Research Association, whose standards contain the following statement: "Any decision about a student's continued education... should not be based on the results of a single test, but should include other relevant and valid information."⁷

As the National Academy of Sciences has explained, "current psychometric standards... recommend that a decision that will have a major impact on a test taker should not be made solely or automatically on the basis of a single test score, and that other relevant information about the student's knowledge and skills should also be taken into account."⁸

If we really want more diverse, integrated schools throughout our system, we must rely on multiple measures, including grades and more holistic factors. In addition, we should discourage tracking as much as possible –

² <http://www.gothamgazette.com/opinion/7871-new-research-shows-shsat-less-valuable-predictor-than-middle-school-grades>

³ Jonathan Taylor, Fairness To Gifted Girls: Admissions To New York City's Elite Public High Schools, *Journal Of Women And Minorities In Science And Engineering* 25(1): 75–91 (2019) at:

<http://www.dl.begeellhouse.com/journals/00551c876cc2f027.294b56436594090b.2e036b8a364ae7df.html>

See also: <https://hechingerreport.org/the-problem-with-high-stakes-testing-and-women-in-stem/>

⁴ Jonathan Taylor, Fairness To Gifted Girls: Admissions To New York City's Elite Public High Schools, *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering*, 25(1): 75–91 (2019).

⁵ <http://www.gothamgazette.com/opinion/7871-new-research-shows-shsat-less-valuable-predictor-than-middle-school-grades>

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/28/nyregion/specialized-high-school-admissions-test-is-racially-discriminatory-complaint-says.html> See also Chester E. Finn, Jr. & Jessica A. Hockett, *Exam Schools Inside America's Most Selective Public High Schools*, 2012.

⁷ <https://www.apa.org/pubs/info/brochures/testing> see also: <http://www.aera.net/About-AERA/AERA-Rules-Policies/Association-Policies/Position-Statement-on-High-Stakes-Testing>

⁸ National Research Council. 1999. *High Stakes: Testing for Tracking, Promotion, and Graduation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, p169 at: <https://doi.org/10.17226/6336>.

another form of segregation that occurs *within* schools that merely widens the achievement gap between racial and ethnic groups.⁹ Separating out kids by “ability” has been shown to disadvantage those who are concentrated in the lowest-performing classrooms.¹⁰ This is why we also oppose segregated gifted programs, especially those based on a high-stakes exam given to children as young as four.

Yet only about four percent of all elementary school children are in gifted classes.¹¹ As NYC schools begin to enroll students of diverse backgrounds, both racially and economically, this will further highlight the reality that children from disadvantaged backgrounds need more support from their teachers to reach the same goals, and that equality isn’t the same as real equity.¹² Integration alone without small classes cannot erase those differences.

Moreover, teachers often understandably complain that it is very difficult to individualize instruction with students of different achievement levels, and indeed it is especially challenging given the large class sizes we have in NYC. But if class sizes were lowered, this would make teachers’ jobs much easier.

In Finland, when the government decided to stop tracking in the middle grades, the national teachers union successfully demanded systematic reductions in class size, to ensure that they could meet the needs of students of different academic levels. Both the elimination of tracking and the concurrent lowering of class sizes contributed to the rapid improvement of Finnish schools in the 1970’s, along with the elimination of most standardized tests.¹³

The Department of Education must also reduce class size to allow teachers to deepen their interactions with students and meaningfully individualize instruction. All students benefit from smaller classes in terms of heightened engagement, fewer disciplinary problems and increased learning, but, as studies show, students of color benefit the most. This is why class size reduction is one of very few reforms proven to work to narrow the opportunity and achievement gap.¹⁴

As Shino Tanikawa, co-chair of the Education Council Consortium (ECC) and a member of the School Diversity Advisory Group, and Leonie Haimson of Class Size Matters concluded in an op-ed published in the Daily News last May, the integration of classrooms must be accompanied by class size reduction if we want to provide true equity to all children.¹⁵ This op-ed is included as an appendix to my testimony.

As NYC schools begin to enroll students of diverse backgrounds, both racially and economically, this will further highlight the reality that children from disadvantaged backgrounds need more support from their teachers to reach the same goals, and that equality isn’t the same as real equity. Integration alone without small classes cannot erase those differences.

In our schools, class sizes have increased substantially since 2007 and are 15% to 30% percent larger on average than class sizes in the rest of the state. More than 336,165 students were crammed into classes of 30 or more

⁹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/04/gifted-and-talented-programs-separate-students-race/587614/>

¹⁰ <https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/pb-options-10-tracking.pdf>

¹¹ <https://nycpublicschoolparents.blogspot.com/2019/09/what-both-supporters-and-critics-of.html>

¹² <https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-lower-class-size-and-school-integration-go-hand-in-hand-20190517-jhwyfyxzhvccrrmp5p2vqoeieau-story.html>

¹³ Samuel Abrams, *Education and the Commercial Mindset*, 2016, p. 281 and footnote 3 on p. 382. Also <https://newrepublic.com/article/82329/education-reform-finland-us>

¹⁴ See the numerous research studies at: <https://www.classsizematters.org/research-and-links/#opportunity>

¹⁵ <https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-lower-class-size-and-school-integration-go-hand-in-hand-20190517-jhwyfyxzhvccrrmp5p2vqoeieau-story.html>

this fall. In the early grades, the number of first-through-third-graders in classes of 30 or more has ballooned by nearly 3000 percent since 2007. Our schools can never provide students with an equitable chance to learn with classes this large.

As we eliminate the use of high-stakes testing and move to create classrooms and schools that are diverse in race, ethnicity, gender, language, ability and more, we need to simultaneously push for small classes because this will make truly differentiated instruction possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify to you today.

Testimony of Lorri Gumanow, NYC Council Education Committee, September 24, 2019

Good afternoon!

My name is Lorri Gumanow and I'm a retired NYC Department of Education special educator, Special Education adjunct instructor at Hunter College, and the parent of a student with disabilities. My son received early intervention services from the age of 6 weeks due to his premature birth and special education services beginning at age 3 and continuing through high school. In the 8th grade, he refused standardized testing and did not participate in the PSAT or SAT in high school. He attended Edward R Murrow High School in their screened studio theater program, received SETSS Services (resource room), passed all his courses, and earned the required 44 credits for a diploma. He earned a theater award at his graduation in 2018. However, due to a math learning disability, he was not able to pass the algebra or geometry regents exam with a 65 (he received a 56, 55 and 46), yet he passed both courses. As a result of not being able to pass a math regents exam with a score of 65, he received a local diploma. He also earned a special Regents endorsement for theater, yet didn't receive it with his diploma because he did not earn a regents diploma.

Because of his failure, New York State deemed him "not college ready" based on their so-called standardized tests and regents exams. Let me rephrase that – he did not receive a regents diploma because of his score on one exam. A single test on a single day in a 15-year public school career determined that he was not "college ready." There is something very wrong with that! This was the algebra regents exam that the year previously, had been reworked to reflect the common core standards, and had a 92% failure rate for students with disabilities. This was the year that students did not have the option of taking the "old" and the "new" exam, and have the higher score count. And so, after all of the special education related services of occupational and physical therapy, after all of the successful inclusion classrooms and team teaching, after all of the excellent professional development his teachers received, after all of the expense of providing these supports and services, and most of all, after all of his dedication and hard work to pass all of his classes, he did not receive a regents diploma because of one test! And because he did not receive a regents diploma, he was not eligible to attend a public SUNY or CUNY 4-year college. One test on one day, out of the 2700 days he attended NYC public schools, was the deciding factor. This should have been a special education success story. There need to be alternative and multiple measures of evaluating our students' progress toward graduation. All of the intense focus on testing and linking test scores to stringent graduation requirements is taking its toll on many of our students with mild disabilities.

Fortunately, for my son there is a happy ending. My son is currently a successful sophomore at Dean College in Franklin, MA. Dean is a test-optional college, meaning they do not require SAT or ACT scores. They do require a high school diploma, and because they are in Massachusetts, do not care what type of diploma he earned. A high school diploma is a high school diploma. He loves being a college student! Dean provides excellent support services, including academic coaching and tutoring. Based on his college audition, my son receives a \$20K/year performing arts scholarship for theater, and will be performing in his second college production next month, while carrying a full load of 16 credits. He is successful despite NY trying to beat him down and calling him a failure.

While my son worked very hard to pass his academic courses, his talents are in the performing arts. He was a member of the TADA! Youth Theater Resident Ensemble, a Drama Desk award winning youth theater, for 7 years. He performed in 9 musicals at TADA! This past July, he received a National Youth Arts Award for Outstanding Supporting Performance in a Musical for his performance in TADA's musical "Geniuses." My son also performed in the Murrow production of "A Few Good Men," while in high school.

People tell me my son is blessed to have me as his mom, because I have always been a fierce advocate, and because I have a deep understanding of how our school system "works." As a special educator, I also knew his due process rights under federal IDEA law, and was able to successfully advocate for him since his birth (He was a 28-week micro-preemie, weighing 1 lb. 13 oz at birth.). Unfortunately, many parents do not have this expertise and information, and many of our bright, talented and passionate students with disabilities are denied the future they desire, in part because of this test and punish system.

My son was not able to follow the “cookie cutter” path to graduation and college, because that path was not appropriate for him. We refused the “mandatory” after-school algebra tutoring, especially after his algebra teacher advised me that the tutoring would not help him pass the new Common Core-based algebra regents exam. Instead, he used that time to focus on his craft and prepared for college auditions instead of wasting his time preparing for a test he would never be able to pass, because the design of the regents exam had been changed.

The testing culture does not work for all students. It works for the students who are good test takers, or those who spend a great deal of educational time focusing solely on test prep, at the expense of other learning. Intense focus and messaging on academic “excellence” through academic testing sends many damaging messages to our children and parents. My son legitimately threatened suicide in the 8th grade when he couldn’t understand his math homework. The big kitchen knife was in his hands. (I share this with his permission.) He thought he was stupid, and would never make us proud of him. That was the last straw for me! I had to make a choice between continuing to subject him to the torture of our test and punish system, and maybe find a dead child in his bed, or support his dreams of being an actor and puppeteer, for which he has enormous talent and passion. This was an easy choice for me.

Standardized tests today should not be called standardized. The passing scores set by the state go up or down every year. They give us unreliable “metrics” that we use to evaluate students, teachers and schools, and then use these numbers to unreliably sort, track and punish. Most parents and students believe this system is valid and reliable. Punishments for poor grades are endured by children, and they begin to resent and hate school. It’s time to find a better way. The false narrative, business model of running our schools through the worship of statistics gleaned from unreliable and invalid tests, is failing our children. I rescued my own son from “failure” by having him focus on his talents, and not standardized tests.

Finally, I want to state that assessment and evaluation are very important components of education. I am not opposed to assessment and evaluation. When I teach, I need to make sure my students have learned. If they have not, I need to teach differently, until they get it. All teachers know this. But unfortunately, today’s standardized test scores and test prep take precedence over teaching. This needs to change! Our teacher’s assessments of the kids they see every day are a more reliable measure of what children know and can do. We need to make some big changes. We cannot allow profit-making testing corporations to continue to lie to us about the so-called failures of our children, our teachers and our schools. We need to have assessments that reflect what our children have learned and what they can do. Our current system is broken and we need teachers, administrators, parents, and students to work together to fix it! Thank you!

Lorri Gumanow

Ed.M. Special Education, Teachers College-Columbia University

Retired NYC DOE Special Education Professional Development Specialist

Retired CUNY-Hunter College Adjunct Instructor – Learning Disabilities Masters Program

Parent of a Former NYC Student with a Disability



Committee on Education, Oversight Hearing: Breaking Testing Culture: Evaluating multiple pathways to determine student mastery

Tuesday, September 24th, 2019

**Testimony of Tasfia Rahman, Policy Coordinator
The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)**

Good Afternoon, Chair Treyger, and members of the Committee on Education. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Since 1986, CACF is the nation's only pan-Asian children and families' advocacy organization and leads the fight for improved and equitable policies, systems, funding, and services to support those in need. The Asian Pacific American (APA) population comprises over 15% of New York City, over 1.3 million people. Yet, the needs of the APA community are consistently overlooked, misunderstood, and uncounted. We are constantly fighting the harmful impacts of the model minority myth, which prevents our needs from being recognized and understood. Our communities, as well as the organizations that serve the community, too often lack the resources to provide critical services to the most marginalized APAs. Working with almost 50 member organizations across the City to identify and speak out on the many common challenges our community faces, CACF is building a community too powerful to ignore.

The Asian Model Minority Myth masks the many challenges that marginalized APA students face in the education system. In NYC, our students often come from immigrant and low-income families, face language barriers, and are the first generation in their families to attend American schools and pursue higher education. In fact, Asian Americans have the highest poverty rate across all ethno-racial groups in the city. Even more egregious is that the perceived success of Asian students in education, particularly around testing, is consistently used as a reason to further marginalize students from other communities of color. The monolithic view of the community is why we continue to advocate for the implementation of policies such as data disaggregation, especially within the education system, which will better shed light on the issues many of our students struggle with.

Today we will testify how a single-test culture negatively impacts APA students, despite the perceived notion of their 'success' in testing. As an alternative, we advocate for utilizing a multiple measures model for assessing a student's academic progress and potential. In the case of NYC's specialized high schools and the entrance exam, for APA parents and students, when faced with the challenge of navigating a complex education

system, a single-test in comparison is the least difficult barrier. Over the years, admission to these schools has become perceived as the only pipeline to success because it is the only aspect of the education system many parents understand. Unfortunately, this misguided hope motivates many parents, particularly limited English proficient APA parents, vulnerable to spending money they do not have in hopes of their children being admitted to a specialized high school.

A vast majority of APA students in public schools do not end up attending specialized high schools or other screened programs despite the overinvestment in test prep. Our communities should be able to explore and understand the variety of academic options available for their children. Language access and access to teachers would help ELL and new immigrant parents unfamiliar with the DOE system and opportunities, rather than making them reliant on private tutoring centers that provide expensive in-language support, but that are incentivized to uphold a paying customer base who are preparing for the SHSAT and other exams.

Additionally, teaching to a single test hurts our students at critical stages of childhood and adolescent development. Rigorous tutoring and exam prep often contribute to high levels of stress, isolation, and shame that young students do not yet have the social skills to manage independently. It also diminishes the capacity to foster more holistic learning among our youth. Further, the emphasis on a high-stakes single test sends a message that a student's worth, beginning as young as four years old, has already been defined by a single number, even before they enter the education system. This can foster unhealthy learning environments for many students that can have a negative impact on their mental health, learning abilities, and outcomes.

In advocating for a multiple-measure model, we also caution the use of specific measures or at least how they are employed to the detriment of APA students and often other students of color. These measures are the most vulnerable to the negative biases about APAs that exist:

- Teacher recommendations
- Proven leadership skills
- Community service

Finally, we commend the Committee's and the City's commitment to educational equity across our school system for all our students. We hope that at the very least, high-stakes, single tests that harm the social and emotional well-being of all of our students are eliminated. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this critical issue and we are happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Dr. Jonathan Katz
Math Specialist
NY Performance Standards Consortium

Statement on Using Alternative Methods for Assessment

Good Afternoon, my name is Dr. Jonathan Katz. I have been involved in education for almost 40 years, 24 of those years as a middle and high school math teacher. It has been a great privilege to have worked with thousands of NYC public school students and hundreds of teachers across the country.

I have taught students who were required to take the math regents and students who had a waiver from the math regents. I want to take this opportunity to describe the difference between those two experiences through the views of a teacher and the thoughts of a student.

As I view the teaching and learning of mathematics I believe we have two purposes in our work.

1. Students should come to appreciate the power and beauty of mathematics.
2. Students should come to understand mathematical ideas with depth and nuance. This will enable students to think mathematically.

How can we make that happen?

Mathematics has both great simplicity and complexity. It can create frustration in a student's mind if they are not given time and opportunities to make sense of ideas and procedures that are presented to them. I stress the term "time" because that is a crucial difference when you are teaching towards an exam or when you are teaching for deep thinking and understanding. When you are asked to have students successfully understand a great deal of math content over a fairly short period of time the learning will be superficial at best and non-existent at worst. Teachers often feel rushed to "cover" the material while many students feel frustrated and angry and come to dislike a beautiful discipline. How disappointing is that and how hurtful it is to both teachers and students. We can see the results of this conundrum where the NY State Math Regents is scored on a scale where a passing grade of 65 is equivalent to less than 33% of the answers being correct. We make believe that students understand mathematics.

But I want to share a more hopeful story. In the NY Performance Standards Consortium we believe in depth over breadth. Students spend 3-4 years grappling with problems, thinking about concepts and procedures with the major goal of having these students view mathematics as sensible and worth their time. As a culminating experience students in our schools will spend 1-2 months working on one problem. Why would we do such a thing? Because that one problem takes on new meaning over time as a student keeps thinking about it. The problem becomes his or her vehicle to expressing their deepest mathematical thinking and understanding while learning new ideas and raising new questions about mathematics. Students become independent thinkers and creators of original thoughts. Students write

about their experience with this problem along with the mathematical thinking and ideas they used to try to make sense of the problem and find its solution. Through this endeavor students are experiencing the work of a mathematician. This approach to teaching and learning prepares students to develop in-depth understanding that is required for students to succeed in mathematics courses once they enroll in college.

I want to share words of a young man from Gambia who never studied mathematics in his country and essentially has studied math for only two years. He was given a problem created by Zeno over 2000 years ago. We know it today as Zeno's Paradox. This young man studies at International Community HS, a consortium school. Here are his words:

Learning math at ICHS has helped me to think mathematically, learn how to think outside the box using different strategies. When I was given a problem I had to think in new ways and research ideas I didn't know about. I have spent 2 months thinking about one problem called, A Walk to the Door. It led me to thinking about limits and I had to study fractions to also be able to think about the problem. Through doing the problem I got fascinated by the ideas of infinite and finite and I was able to connect it to my life. The amount of math I know today as compared to when I came to this country is amazing and I thank my teachers and ICHS for believing in and for supporting me.

This young man's experience is not unusual. Working on a PBAT changed the way he thought about math and thought about himself.

If we are willing to rethink what it means to teach and learn and have the belief that all students can truly learn mathematics we could see a dramatic change in the way students experience and talk about mathematics.

Jeannie Ferrari
Principal, Humanities Preparatory Academy, New York Performance Standards Consortium

Testimony on the Effectiveness of Portfolio-Based Assessments 9/24/19

Standardized tests like the Regents assess compliance, recall, memorization, speed, how to follow directions, and how to sort. These skills were useful in the past century when the majority of our workforce were trained for routine labor in factories. But they're are very outdated in the 21st century.

What and how we choose to assess drives everything from instruction, culture, equity and even safety in a school. New York state students, many of whom are English Language Learners or have IEPs, are subjected to entire courses designed to prepare them for tests. They are taught to cram, memorize, recall, sit still, be quiet, and follow directions. What we assess shows what we value, and it also shows what we value in our children. Our Chancellor has courageously set a vision of Equity and Access for all students in New York City. Let's adopt an assessment system that aligns with those values.

My school, Humanities Preparatory Academy, is part of a Consortium of high schools in New York City and State who assess students based on their performance on a series of research projects called PBATs, or PBA's. These projects are aligned with New York State and Common Core standards. Each student presents a minimum of four PBAT projects in core subject areas to a panel of teachers and outside evaluators from the community. Their presentation is then rated on a rubric and shared with the student immediately.

Students spend a lot of time preparing for these projects and presentations. They are tailored to individual learning needs and ensure that each child gets consistent and meaningful feedback about their work. Perhaps most exceptionally, PBAT projects teach and assess college and career readiness skills for the 21st century: skills like using reasoning and logic to solve a problem, determining the validity of evidence and arguments, finding credible and strong sources to

support ideas, making connections between an issue and its larger social and-political context, revising written work, presenting ideas to an audience in a clear and convincing way, collaborating with others on a team to find solutions to complex problems, developing stamina and persistence in the writing process, and utilizing experimental design.

The PBATs measure much more rigorous skills than the Regents- but each student is supported individually to master them. It is not one size fits all. Assessing students in this way would fundamentally shift how students engage with school. It would offer students access not just to college acceptance- but to college graduation. As a Principal, I know that my students have truly succeeded when they graduate from college. Every single college graduate at Humanities Preparatory Academy cites the PBAT process as the main factor that helped them succeed.

I hope that New York State will lead the way towards a truly equitable, rigorous, and effective assessment system.

Larissa Tejada

Freshman at Brooklyn College

Alumni of Humanities Preparatory Academy, New York Performance Standards Consortium

9/24/19

Good afternoon, my name is Larissa Tejada. I graduated from Humanities Preparatory Academy this past June as valedictorian, and I am now a freshman at Brooklyn College. Humanities Preparatory Academy is a small public high school that is in the *New York Performance Consortium*, a group of 48 schools that focuses on portfolio based assessments as a graduation requirement rather than regents exams. For those who do not know, my former school Humanities Preparatory Academy and the 47 other schools in the consortium are exempt from New York State regents exams, with the exception of the English Regents, and use portfolio based assessment tasks or PBATs as an alternative. My classmates and I all wrote research papers in the four core subjects-- English, History, Math and Science-- and presented them to a panel of teachers that read, questioned and graded us off both our writing and presentation skills. Personally my four PBATs were empowering and helped me grow as an intellectual. As a freshman at Prep, I was taught how to properly write a cohesive, well-thought essay and how to defend this essay with peer review and discussion. As my high school career proceeded, I grew as a writer and an intellectual. My junior year, I wrote and presented three PBATs: English, Science and Math. It was a challenging year, I was taking AP US History, starting to think about the college process, writing three of my graduation requirements and dealing with personal issues of my own, however, I knew I was prepared to face all my responsibilities. My three papers were about three distinct topics: Dystopian Literature and Patriarchy, Physics and Warfare and Statistics and School Policing. After presenting my three papers and passing, I felt more secure in my education, I knew I actually understood what I had learned in each class and that I can apply it to real world experiences. This is where I find that standardized tests such as the regents fail us students. At Prep, I was taught in a way which ensured that I understood the topic, and allowed for my own interpretation. Rather than a system that forces us to cram and regurgitate what we can onto a test that eventually determines if we're fit to graduate from the high school program. After writing and presenting my final paper for History, focusing on the death penalty, I knew I was prepared as a writer and student to move on to college. I recently submitted a first draft for my first college paper. My professor gave us a prompt, the MLA format requirement and no rubric, and with little guidance, I applied the writing skills I learned at Prep and submitted the draft. At the end of last week, my professor sent me my edits and included a message

This is a strong, vividly embodied, and committed first draft. My comments have marked local areas where sentence structure can be smoothed out and generalities can be deepened. Too, I've marked how you can widen the angle on your conclusion. But overall, you're well on your way toward a final draft and a unified narrative voice. Well done.

-Tom

It is safe to say that I was successful in my first draft because of the education I received at Humanities Preparatory Academy and the focus on educating students and preparing them for both discussions and writing in college rather than preparation for a test.

Kelany de la Cruz Reyes

Student, Humanities Preparatory Academy, New York Performance Standards Consortium

9/24/19

Good afternoon, my name is Kelany De La Cruz. I am a student at Humanities Preparatory Academy. In my school we are fortunate to have Performance Based Assessment Tasks as a graduation requirement and not regents. I prefer PBATs more than I will ever prefer standardized tests because they help me grow my creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and writing skills. This is something that the regents do not do. My test grades simply tell the people grading the test a few details about me, but not the truth. If they did then they would have known that I failed my state exams in sixth grade because one year was not enough for me to learn how to write, read, and speak a foreign language. They would have also showed them that I was still figuring out this country and their ways of teaching. I went to summer school because I did not pass my state exams, but what if they had held me back? Then I would not be part of the senior class of 2020. The tests did not measure my ability as a student, it measured what I could recall in those stressful hours. Going to school to be prepared for a test is not real learning since the student is only getting facts and trying to memorize them while the teacher rushes to the next topic. When I face tests I become anxious, I can't concentrate. In the test I write whatever I remember not what I learned because that is what we are taught. To memorize, not to learn. Here at my school, I don't memorize, I actually learn. I have done three PBATs and I have not guessed a word in any of them. I know what I am doing because when our teachers are teaching us we don't just get facts for a test, we actively participate in our learning. We are able to discuss with our classmates and do our own research to challenge both the idea presented to us and ourselves. I learned all I had to learn before writing and presenting my PBAT and when I was doing it I was still learning. My teachers did not stop after they read my final paper, they kept challenging further even after my presentation was over. When I look back at my research paper I am proud of the work I see because it is not mere memorization, it is work that I can defend. Throughout the classes at my school I am challenged and guided towards new learning opportunities, and in my final research paper I am an expert. But not in standardized tests. What do I learn from exams?

nothing besides the fact that they make me anxious. Our education system should not be preparing us to remember shallow facts, it should guide us to be bold in our understanding and challenge our intellect. Thank you.

Lucca Coelho

Student, Humanities Preparatory Academy, New York State Performance Standards Consortium
9/24/19

Hello, my name is Lucca Coelho, and I am currently a senior at Humanities Preparatory Academy. I moved here from Brazil, not so long ago. I grew up in an education system where tests are the main form of proving how much people know about a certain subject. Therefore all me and my classmates would do, is try to memorize and somewhere understand the subject. Ironically, memorizing/remembering is considered the lowest level of thinking. For the past hundred years, we have been using the same way to “test” people’s knowledge, based on how well they remember. Rather than deeply analyse their capability to create, evaluate, and apply their understanding into a piece of work. Why do colleges always ask for a graded written assignment? Why are so many of them going “test optional” and requiring more written creations? Because times are changing, and so are our minds. Our goal isn’t to prepare students to follow orders and turn into robots, working at factories. Our goal is to show them how they can improve their critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity. PBATs require a lot more effort from your brain, than the Regents.

Math is a good example. In tests, you have to use the formulas you were taught to remember, under time pressure, to see if you get the answer right. While on a Math PBAT, you are meant to explain why you would use such formula, and what the formula actually means. Part of the Rubric says: Make sure to include proof, reasoning, and analysis. Most of the time you can either create your own formulas, and reach many different branches of a simple concept, just by simply taking your time to dig into it. The second and last step of a PBAT, is to present it. Teachers will be able to brainstorm with the students, and get a more indepth perspective, of

what is great and what isn't about their work. Giving them feedback that could be used for future experiences, rather than just a grade in form of number.

Having test taking skills is definitely not a bad thing, but I would argue that having wider and more developed methods of thinking would prepare you better for the future. Thank you for your time.

Chyanne Pena

September 21, 2019

Student, Humanities Preparatory Academy, New York Performance Standards Consortium

At Humanities Prep, we do PBATS which means Performance Based Assessment Task. PBATS are not like traditional test like the SATS, ACT or regents. PBATS are less stressful, prepares you for college and they build skills that are helpful in the future. There are 4 PBATS that students take in their junior and senior year and, sometimes if the teacher feels the student is ready, they are able to write 1 their sophomore year. Those 4 PBATS are based on common classes like Science, Mathematics, Social Studies and English. Based on students' schedules they are able to take all 4 PBATS in 1 year or spread them out. It all depends on the students preference and the schools schedule. In those courses students are able to choose a topic they are interested in or passionate about and they research the topic to answer a question they have or to prove their points. Students work closely with their teachers and peers when discussing the topic and when reviewing/editing. The process is to let the student explore their voice as young writers and members of a community. PBATS allow for students to be expressive and think "out of the box". Some students for their English PBAT have used lyrics from a song and connected to a bigger social issue. Another student used patterns they found in a board game to create mathematical functions to help beat that particular game. In their Science course, a student was able to grow oysters and perform a lab on oysters then wrote a paper about it. Someone in their Social Studies PBAT was able to analyze women's contribution to the world wars and their relation to voting rights. After writing their papers, they present their PBATS on a panel explaining their process and also, to emphasize points they feel are essential to understanding their paper. At the end, the panelists ask the student out of the room as they discuss the grade of the paper and presentation. If, for some reason, the student didn't pass their presentation because or errors in their work there are opportunities for students to go back and fix those errors and present again. Overall, PBATS are a learning experience that prepares and encourages students for college writing. The process of PBATS are reassuring in the sense that it prepares students for challenging work but it also motivates students to persevere when there are obstacles in their way.

As a student at Prep I can confidently say that PBATS have made me a better writer, by increasing my writing stamina, improving my analytical skills and allowing me to voice my opinions. Before, in middle school, I was intimidated by writing. My hands would get sweaty, I'd get headaches and a horrible feeling in my stomach. That not only extended to writing but also tests in general. The thought of having a cap on how much work I had to do in one sitting was unbearable. Once I finished with the multiple choice answers and the short answers, I was left with a cramped, clammy hand and 3-4 pages of empty space to write an essay. I wasn't always the best test taker but I tried my best and that felt like enough, or so I thought. When I'd get

those tests back I was disappointed in myself for not getting as high as my peers and was ultimately embarrassed. I questioned if I was as intelligent as I thought I was and if school was meant for me. The teachers told us that it took practice but it felt as though every time we took a test I was doomed from the start. So I told myself I would never take a test again and applied to Humanities Preparatory Academy. However when I got to Prep I found out about PBATS. Again that nervous, nauseating feeling came back. I was only a freshman but the anxiety of tests still filled me up. When I reached my junior year, I figured it was best to take PBATS head on. I stayed in during lunch and after school to work on PBATS. I was frustrated but still motivated because after all I had 3 more to do. So I worked hard on my paper, constantly asking my teacher for help. When I was done I had felt like I had a weight off my shoulder and also found a new sense of confidence in myself. I was able to write an 11-15 page paper which convincing evidence, proper citations and analysis. For my first PBAT I got a 4 on my presentation and a 3.5. I was elated and happy to be done with 1 PBAT. Coming out of that experience was stressful considering my 'test stress' and my thought that I was just unable to write, but looking back it was one of my best moments. I came to the realization that it wasn't that I couldn't write, it was the fear that was instilled in my head from middle school. The fear that testing is the one thing that confirms or denies your intelligence. Those experiences of staying in a room for 3 hours with 2 no.2 pencils, a calculator, with built up anxiety and not having the ability to stay still stayed with me until I was a junior in high school. PBAT courses and teachers taught me that I am more than my test scores, than my fears and that I am more than capable. That following summer of my junior year, I signed up for a summer immersion program called Columbia Freedom & Citizenship. There I would be reading some material from philosophers, writing daily responses to what we had read and then, later in the year, create a project calling attention to a social issue. The same feeling of anxiety came over me but I was able to soothe it. I told myself "You've already written three papers that were up to 20 pages, what is a one page response to a 20 page paper?". So I did the 1-page responses every night. I was able to analyze difficult content by Socrates, John Locke, John Hobbes, Jean Rousseau and many more. I was able to connect their ideas and make connections with present day life. I was able to form a sound argument and stand up for my ideas. While everyone was complaining about the whole ordeal, I was OK. I felt peace because I knew I could do it and I did. Now, whenever there is a paper due at school or writing samples are due for college, I can do it because of PBATS. Tests and writing no longer make me afraid, I am confident in the work I do and most of all I feel prepared for college more than ever.

FOR THE RECORD

I am writing to submit testimony for the hearing "Breaking Testing Culture: Evaluating multiple pathways to determine student mastery."

I am the parent to two public school students, a 7th grader at MS 442 in Brooklyn and a sophomore at the NYC iSchool in Soho who graduated from MS 442. When my oldest child first applied to MS 442, the school's test scores were in the very low teens. Many of our fellow D15 families refused to go and look at the school when we went to tour. What we saw when we went was everything we were looking for in a school--inquiry based, student centered learning with projects in every subject. The school uses a mastery-based grading system that let students know even if they haven't yet achieved mastery in a subject, they have room, time, and support to grow and master the subject. The entire school is an ICT setting so every classroom has two teachers and the school truly understands that every student is different and needs different supports or extensions.

Our son was vibrating with excitement when we left the tour and we ranked it number one on our middle school application. When other families heard what we had done, many of them were shocked and asked how we could consider a school with such bad test scores. An administrator in our elementary school even told us to change our application. But we knew that test scores don't tell the real story and what they were showing us in this case is that MS 442 serves high populations of students for whom the test is biased--students with disabilities, students living in poverty, and brown and black students. But because we had the banner of test scores, white and affluent families were excused from looking at the school, thus helping to perpetuate the segregation that existed.

My son did go to MS 442 and had a wonderful experience. Along with our arrival, several other white and somewhat more affluent families joined the school, so that when our daughter went to apply three years later, test scores had risen somewhat to reflect the new demographics in the school. But what that also did was signal to white and affluent families who had warned us against the school for our son, that it was an acceptable choice now. When my daughter was applying, the same families who had gasped in horror three years earlier about the "bad test scores" were asking if we could help them get in to the school now (which of course we couldn't).

But here's the thing--I know because I had a kid in the school across the span of years that the program is the same program we looked at when the test scores were in the teens. The teachers remain as committed as they were then, the work in the classroom is as innovative today as it was then. But there are more students in the school now for whom the test was created, and fewer for whom it was not. So naturally the test scores went up.

We should not set up a system where these flawed metrics can be used to dismiss whole communities and to perpetuate hoarding privilege. The DOE and Mayor know this, as they have championed the new middle school admission program that took effect in D15 that has done away with using these test

scores to rank students. The next logical step would be to do away with the tests for the ways they continue to be used--to rank schools and perpetuate segregation, to punish schools for serving high populations of students for whom the tests were not created, and to punish teachers for serving those populations.

The Mayor and DOE have been smart enough to recognize, at least in D15, that these tests tell us nothing useful about our students. If we know that they don't, we must get rid of them once and for all and stop allowing them to perpetuate segregation and to call down punishment on the populations they were created to keep down.

Thank you,

Jody Drezner Alperin

FOR THE RECORD

My name is Lorri Gumanow and I'm a retired NYC DOE special educator and the parent of a student with disabilities. My son refused NYS standardized testing in the 8th grade, and did not take the PSAT or SAT in high school. He attended Edward R Murrow High School in their screened studio theater program, received SETSS Services (resource room), passed all his courses, earning the required 44 credits for a diploma. He earned a theater award at graduation. Due to a math learning disability, he was not able to pass the algebra or geometry regents exam with a 65 (he received a 56, 55 and 46), yet passed both courses. As a result, he received a local diploma, and his GPA was a B-. He earned a Regents endorsement for theater, yet didn't receive it because he did not earn a regents diploma.

He was a member of the TADA! Youth Theater Resident Ensemble, a Drama Desk award winning youth theater, for 7 years.

My son is currently a successful sophomore at Dean College in Franklin, MA. He loves being a college student! He receives a \$20K/year scholarship for theater, and will be performing in his second college production next month, while carrying a full load of 16 credits. He lives in a residence hall and travels independently.

New York State deemed him "not college ready" based on their so-called standardized tests and regents exams. I never believed that and made sure he didn't believe that either. We found the right college for him, and he continues to receive outstanding academic coaching and support services at Dean College. And, he is passionate about what he is studying, and works very hard at it.

People tell me my son is blessed to have me as his mom, because I have a deep understanding of how our test and punish system "works." It doesn't! I also knew our due process rights under federal IDEA law, and was able to successfully advocate for him since his birth (He was a 28-week micro-preemie, weighing 1 lb 13 oz at birth.). Unfortunately, many parents do not have this expertise and information, and many of our bright, talented and passionate students with disabilities are denied the future they desire, in part because of this test and punish system.

My son did not follow the "cookie cutter" path to graduation and college, because that path was not appropriate for him. We refused the "mandatory" after-school algebra tutoring, especially after his algebra teacher advised me that the tutoring would not help him pass the new Common Core-based algebra regents exam. Instead, he used that time to participate at Murrow in a dramatic production of "A Few Good Men," and in TADA! Theater's production of "Geniuses" which earned him a National Youth Arts Award for Outstanding Supporting Performance in a Musical.

The testing culture does not work for all students. It works for the students who are good test takers, or those who spend a great deal of educational time focusing solely on test prep, at the expense of other learning. Intense focus and messaging on academic "excellence" through academic testing sends many damaging messages to our children and parents. My son legitimately threatened suicide in the 8th grade when he couldn't understand his math homework. The big kitchen knife was in his hands. (I share this with his permission.) He thought he was stupid, and would never make us proud of him. That was the last straw for me! I had to make a choice between continuing to subject him to the torture of our test and punish system, and maybe find a dead child in his bed, or support his dreams of being an actor and puppeteer, for which he had enormous talent and passion.

Tests are the easy way out. They give us unreliable "metrics" that we use to evaluate students, teachers and schools, and then use these numbers to unreliable sort, track and punish. Most parents and students believe this system is valid and reliable. Punishments for poor grades are endured by children, and they begin to resent and hate school. It's time to find a better way. The false narrative, business model of running our schools through the worship of statistics, is failing our children. I rescued my own son from failure, but I can't save them all - but I wish I could!

Evaluation is an important component of education. When I teach, I need to make sure my students have learned. If they have not, I need to teach differently, until they get it. All teachers know this. But unfortunately, the standardized test takes precedence over our teacher's assessments of the kids they see everyday. This needs to change! We need to work together to figure this out. We cannot allow profit-making testing corporations to continue to lie to us about our children.

Lorri Gumanow

917-697-8873

Retired NYC DOE Special Educator

Retired CUNY-Hunter College Adjunct Instructor - Special Education

Parent of a Former NYC Student with a Disability

FOR THE RECORD

Written Testimony for Brooke Parker

Tuesday, September 24, 2019

New York City Council Education Committee

Oversight - Breaking Testing Culture: Evaluating Multiple Pathways to Determine Student Mastery.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views to the committee.

In early 3rd grade, my daughter, Vivian, came home from school and through tears informed me that she wasn't going to go to college. I told her that I was okay if she didn't want to go to college but wanted to know why she thought she wouldn't. She told me that she would never be "college ready." That was a term we had never used in our home. She felt that she was failing in her classroom in preparation for the state tests and that the consequences for that would impact her for the rest of her life. She was 8 years old. I know that there are a lot of kids with IEPs like my daughter who feel that way.

That year I was invited by Councilmember Steven Levin to meet with then Chancellor Farina and a group of other parents in my district to discuss the state tests. I asked the Chancellor if she thought that my daughter, who in 3rd grade was reading at an early Kindergarten level, should sit for several days in front of a test that she couldn't read, a test that wasn't designed for her, that would fail her. Chancellor Farina agreed that it wasn't appropriate and that if she were me, she too would refuse the state tests. I was pleased that she agreed but disturbed that she refused to inform other parents of kids with special needs that they can refuse the state tests too. These kids are spending all year preparing for and then hours sitting in front of a test that will give absolutely no important information about their skills, their comprehension, their talents, their intelligence, but will tell them that they are failures and will judge their schools by their scores.

I was steadfast in my belief that the state tests could offer no important information about my daughter's education or the quality of her teachers. I did more research and learned that schools with high percentages of kids with IEPs and English Language Learners would be penalized for low test scores, and then forced to double down on even more test prep which will further negatively impact the education these kids really need to succeed.

I knew how to opt my daughter out of taking the state tests, but plenty of parents of students with special needs and parents of English Language Learners don't know their rights. I was outraged to learn that my school's principal was pressuring parents to take the state tests and giving parents misinformation about what would happen to their children if they did. How much of that had to do with the merit bonuses that school principals and assistant principals receive

for raising the test scores of students in their schools? It's hard to say because the pressure was also coming from the state, the mayor, and the chancellor.

Not a single educator or administrator can justify using the state standardized tests to measure learning in children like my daughter. We know that there is no valuable information to gather from that data, however much the state weaponizes that data to evaluate teachers or close schools or pay principals more. Yet the stakes attached to those tests mean that even if I opt my daughter out of the test itself, I can't opt her out of a classroom or school that has structured itself around getting high test scores; from the class materials geared towards the state test, to weeks of classroom time lost.

When we discuss the kinds of information we need to measure student mastery, we must have that discussion with special education students in mind and include experts in special education at the table. If we don't include experts in special education, we're sending a clear message to children like mine, that school is not for them.

Statement for Hearing on "Breaking the Testing Culture in NYC Schools" 9/24/19

I've taught eleventh and twelfth grade English Language Arts in the New York City Public Schools for sixteen years. Both schools I've worked in have accepted students from all over the city, without any screens to filter students out based on scores, grades, attendance, or parental involvement. For this reason, I have worked with a wide range of students, many of whom struggle tremendously in school, whether because of poverty, learning differences, language barriers, or all of the above. I have seen first hand the harmful, spirit-crushing, and at times traumatic impact of the test-obsessed culture on all stakeholders in our schools.

My first five years were spent in a Performance Standards Consortium school, where the only high-stakes exam students were required to take was the one in ELA, my subject. In place of Regents Exams, each student was required to complete a total of eight graduation portfolios (Performance-Based Assessment Tasks - PBATs), in both academic and social-emotional areas of learning, and present these to a panel of adults. Students would enter as shy, uncertain ninth graders and graduate as confident learners able to articulate their understandings and respond in real time to questions and feedback. Some went beyond the requirements because of their own interest or passion, whereas students with learning differences could complete tasks tailored to their own strengths. The system was not perfect, but it was on a human scale, it attended to each student, and it fostered community and growth.

I have seen the difference in the kind of education students receive in a school focused on authentic learning and assessment, versus in a school where Regents Exams overly determine the curriculum and values. To be clear, Regents-limited schools are forced to promote "learning" that is formulaic, surface-level, and focused on absorbing and replicating the status quo. Especially in a school where many students are entering underprepared due to their previous test-centered schooling, there is little to no room for student-driven inquiry, student-posed problems or solutions, or the orientation to learning that would be required to empower young people to critique, reimagine, or transform their world. Teachers in my school do their valiant best to find and create the space for this kind of education, but the reality is that it's not valued in the current system, and administrators, teachers, and students are not rewarded for it. Until we set up our system to value what truly matters in education, everyone involved will be compromised and none of us will be able to meet our potential. This is shameful and tragic.

Over the years, I have witnessed a pronounced shift in my students, so that my role as a twelfth grade teacher began to feel more like a triage practitioner, trying to ascertain the amount of academic and emotional damage each had sustained through their previous 9 years of testing. The seniors I've served for the past few years have spent a full 75% of their 12 years in school preparing for; taking; worrying about; and being judged, labeled, and sorted based on high-stakes tests. Many could pinpoint that third grade was the year when their love of learning

ended. If they've passed all their Regents Exams by senior year, they struggle to find any motivation to learn without a high-stakes test looming over them. In fact, the difficulty of reconnecting them to the inherent human desire to learn became my main challenge, as I sought alternatives to the fear and anxiety they were accustomed to as motivation. And for those students who had taken but failed one or more of the Regents Exams required to graduate, some of them would have to sit for a test they'd already failed up to 5 times, the week before they were slated to graduate from high school and go on to college. Imagine being an immigrant to this country, struggling to learn a new language and culture, or being a student with special needs, or just someone with severe test anxiety, and knowing that you will not be able to graduate with your peers and move on to college unless you pass an exam you've taken and failed over and over and over. God forbid you get sick that day! Or someone in your family has an emergency! The cruelty of the system boggles the mind.

But, you might ask, how will we ensure all our students are learning and that we're holding everyone accountable for meeting equitable high standards without these allegedly standardized tests? First of all, it's not working. The culture of testing is not achieving that, so I'm not sure why we continue to pretend that if we perpetuate it, change will occur. The students entering high school having spent third-through-eighth grade taking State tests are far less prepared for rigorous, in-depth learning than they would be had their teachers been able to provide them with an inquiry-based, project-rich curriculum. And second, children are not standardized, and corporations should not be profiting off of creating testing materials that treat kids as if there is something wrong with them for being unique. As I've learned of the dark history of standardized testing, which has its roots in the racist Eugenics movement, I cannot stomach pretending that these tests are objective measures, or that we will ever address the inequities in our education system by using tools based in white supremacist norms.

In addition, I am now the parent of a public school first grader, and this has provided me a completely new perspective on the culture of testing in elementary school. I was shocked to hear an experienced and highly skilled first grade teacher say that they have an obligation to begin to emotionally prepare six year olds for testing, since they'll be taking state exams in 2 years. "This is the system we are all a part of," she said, regretfully but with resignation. I reminded her that this is not the case if parents join the Opt-Out boycott, but apparently the culture of high-stakes testing is so pervasive that a first grader's education is already being tainted by the spectre of these exams. Even at a school that strives to provide arts instruction and other enrichment, tests occupy an outsize amount of territory in the teachers' understanding of their job - and this is simply not right. We must change the system and let teachers teach and students learn and grow.

When I think of all the time, energy, and resources wasted on testing that could be devoted to developmentally appropriate, innovative, play-based activities, art, dance, music, movement, foreign language, field trips, social studies projects and

hands on science inquiry, the sense of lost opportunities is overwhelming. We know this disproportionately impacts poor students, students of color, students with special needs, and English language learners, but it impacts all our kids - and it turns them off from a love for learning that is every child's birthright.

The culture of high-stakes testing hurts our children, our educators, our schools, our communities, and our future as a democratic society. If we truly want to cultivate lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and change agents, we must reject this paradigm and have the courage and the will to envision and then enact another way.

Rachel Posner
Brooklyn, NY

Sara M. Steinweiss

Email: S.Steinweiss@gmail.com

T: (347)587-0697

September 24, 2019

Re: NYC Council Oversight Committee on Education: “Breaking Testing Culture: Evaluating multiple pathways to determine student mastery.”

To Councilman Mark Treyger and The New York City Council Oversight Committee on Education,

“I see you. When no one else sees you; I see you. And I have your back, because I see you!” – Sara Steinweiss

I was born and raised in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn and I am a product of the NYC Department of Education. As a child I attended P.S. 186, Seth Low JHS and New Utrecht HS. I am also a product of a single parent home. On February 14, 1983 when I was 5 years old and in kindergarten my father came home from work as a NYC Department of Education Music Teacher at JHS 258 and had a massive heart attack in front of my mother, two brother’s and myself. That day changed my entire life and set forth a path of perseverance, courage, and wisdom, as well as depression, anxiety and school phobia. As a child I was fortunate to have schools that surrounded my family and a mother that in addition to being a single parent managed to work full time and be the President of every PTA in the schools my brothers and I attended. However, even with my mother’s involvement and endless dedication to ensuring equity and availability of programs for ALL students in the District she represented, I silently suffered. With dealing with the death of a parent, being overweight, too tall, harassed by students in school I began to feel unseen, by everyone. I was the child like many that we teach that felt lost, lonely, misunderstood and found it hard to see a light at the end of the tunnel. I made it through elementary and middle school because my mother continued to ensure that I had connections to teachers and programs. In elementary school I struggled and when I went to middle school programs like RAPP group, music, home economics and chorus were my lifeline. I still struggled. When I moved into high school depression and anxiety was masked by my smile. I was completely lost, and I could not see my place in the world. As a senior at New Utrecht I decided to start the New Utrecht High School Theatre Program. There was no theatre program and I wanted to create a place where I would fit in because there was nothing that made me feel whole. And so, the New Utrecht High School Theatre Program began. Upon graduating I volunteered at New Utrecht High School to keep the program running while studying to be an

English Teacher at Brooklyn College. Within four years of leaving New Utrecht as a student I returned as an educator. I wanted to follow my father's legacy of being a teacher and helping young adults along their journey.

Here I am 20 years later being involved in so many aspects of education. I taught with the Department of Education for 13 years, worked with Councilman Vincent Gentile as his Educational Liaison for 3 years and now own Conflict Resolution Systems creating workshops and trainings for educators, students, parents and corporations in healthy communication, anti-bullying, leadership and more. Here's what I have learned in my years in education as both a student and educator, when it comes to understanding student mastery, WE NEED TO FIND A NEW WAY!!! WE ARE FAILING OUR STUDENTS AND LOSING AN ENTIRE GENERATION! As a high school teacher for 13 years I watched my students struggle in so many areas; not only in general subject areas but with emotions, housing, finances, becoming a young adult and learning to find their inner light. As educators it is our job to help break down walls, but when we show our students the path to break down walls and behind that wall is a slate of cement, we leave them defeated. That is exactly what we are doing by continuing to assess students with exams like the Regent exams. To educate means to, "give intellectual, moral, and social instruction to (someone, especially a child), typically at a school or university." In my 20 years in education I am grateful that I was able to create and foster programs like the New Utrecht High Theatre Guild. When I say this program saved lives, I literally mean this program saved lives; starting with mine! When I started this program as a senior it gave me a purpose and because I directed my first play as a senior in high school it showed me that I wanted to be a teacher and lead me to my true path. Theatre teaches so much more than just putting together a show. It teaches discipline, planning, organizing, integrity, commitment, leadership, teamwork, communication, finance, and so much more. There's lighting, sound, playbills, set design, acting, singing, dancing, choreography, music, directing, ticket sales, props, scenery, stage crew and so much more. Imagine learning all of these positions and realizing through these roles that you can run a classroom, a board room, create your own business, become a sound engineer, or simply take chances to create the life you envision because someone showed you how to dream and believe in yourself.

Today I have the pleasure of sitting here with Anthony Ramos as he shares his story; our story, with all of you. It's an honor to be a part of his journey and to have had the opportunity to use my skills and perseverance to help open doors in his life. Anthony represents thousands of my students who are out in the world as teachers, lawyers, doctors, parents, entrepreneurs, social workers, administrators, athletes, artists, accountants, researchers, but most of all productive

members of society. When you talk to any one of these amazing humans what they all have in common is what they learned being a part of the theatre program.

When we educate to a test and do not understand that it is time to explore other paths and arm our students with a variety of useful skills to utilize in society, we fail our students. Especially our high school students. We give them false hope that if they graduate from High School they are prepared to go to college and go out into the world because after all they graduated with a Regents Diploma. In the grand scheme it means absolutely nothing. We are not giving our students real skills to harness their inner light, to fight for what they believe in, to figure out what they excel at and to utilize all of that to figure out a pathway to a career. I am a former high school English teacher and the English regents has not changed much since I graduated from High School in 1995! We push students to learn how to respond to essays using literary elements but it's okay if their grammar isn't perfect. We force them to answer a critical lens essay, but if they fail to use punctuation correctly, it's okay they still get points for knowing how to organize that essay in the set format we have drilled into their heads for three years. What we do not have the time to focus on is critical thinking, loving literature, navigating what their strengths and weaknesses and allowing them to take their strengths to the next level. What we fail to look at is how many of our students graduate from NYC High Schools and take remedial classes in College for more than a YEAR! Why because they do not have the necessary skills to be a college student. Additionally, we leave these young people floundering to figure out who they are and what they want to do with their future. Imagine an education system that allowed high school students full access to explore programs in arts, theatre, culinary, law, mechanics, entrepreneur skills, communication, finance, civic service, the list can go on because the truth is when we meet students where they are and put their needs first the possibilities are ENDLESS. It's time to rethink education, to rethink assessment, to THINK and to put programs and assessments in place that allow our young adults the opportunity to walk out of high school knowing what they want and a strategy of how to get there.

Thank you Councilman Treyger and the entire Oversight Committee on Education for bringing this topic to the table and starting the NECESSARY conversation and work needed to change our education system to meet the needs of our students.

FOR THE RECORD

I am a public school teacher at an elementary school in Brooklyn. I have taught grades k-4 and have seen the damage that high stakes testing does to student learning, particularly for English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Because the tests are not differentiated, nor developmentally appropriate for young children and measure only a narrow skillset, high stakes testing does not just fail to benefit struggling students-- but also, it can actually hurt them. I have proctored tests for students, who after sitting through a month of mindless, developmentally inappropriate test prep, have looked at the first question and put their heads down and cried because they couldn't do it no matter how hard they tried. High stakes testing pushes these students to see themselves as failures at a young age, making them less willing to take on other academic challenges and thrive in school. These students are often limited in where they can attend middle school as a result of their test scores, perpetuating school segregation.

As teachers, we're expected to differentiate our instruction to meet children where they are. These tests don't help us do that and they don't help kids learn anything beyond test taking strategies and that school is boring. We should look to the consortium high schools that use portfolio based assessment as a model so that teachers can actually differentiate and meet all kids needs.

Anonymous teacher

Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma

Coordinator: Ashley Grant • agrant@advocatesforchildren.org • 212-822-9548

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Education

RE: Breaking Testing Culture: Evaluating multiple pathways to determine student mastery

September 24, 2019

My name is Ashley Grant. I am an attorney at Advocates for Children of New York. I also coordinate the statewide Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma. On behalf of the Coalition, thank you for the opportunity to speak about high-stakes tests and the need for more ways to determine that students have mastered high school graduation standards.

Our coalition of more than 70 members includes advocates, educators, parents and youth, representing a broad cross-section of students, including students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and economically disadvantaged young people. For more than 12 years, we have come together to urge New York State to create multiple instructional and assessment pathways to a high school diploma, each of which holds all students to high expectations, provides them with quality instruction, and opens doors to career and post-secondary opportunities. We are also united by the concern that access to existing graduation pathways, such as Career and Technical Education (CTE) and work-based learning—opportunities which have been shown to improve student engagement, reduce dropout rates, and improve college completion rates—have been limited for many students. I am attaching a copy of the coalition's policy agenda.

New York Students Need Pathways to a Diploma that Do Not Rely on High-Stakes Exams

To earn a diploma in our State, students must generally pass five Regents exams or must substitute other high-stakes tests in the same subject area. Research shows that high-stakes tests are poor indicators of post-secondary readiness and that locally-determined measures like GPA better predict how students will do in college. High-stakes tests create disproportionate barriers for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and students of color. For these reasons, most states have rolled back or eliminated these graduation requirements. Today, New York is one of only 11 states that maintain exit exams. What is more, New York's requirement that students pass *five* exams is among the most burdensome in the country. It is time for New York to catch up with the rest of the country and to find ways for students to demonstrate that they are ready for college and career without forcing them to pass high-stakes exams.

The State's current graduation requirements create a barrier to post-secondary opportunity for students who are otherwise ready to graduate and move on to the next phase of their lives. Take for example, an English Language Learner in foster care whom Advocates for Children assisted and I will call Myra. Myra is very bright, and earned more than 50 credits, far exceeding the coursework required for a Regents diploma. Myra did well in her classes and maintained a B average, but struggled to pass the Regents exam in English Language Arts. After completing all of her other graduation requirements at age 19, rather than going on to college, Myra had to spend two years studying for and re-taking the English Language Arts (ELA) exam. Eventually, after taking the exam *7 times*, she finally passed it at the

Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma

Coordinator: Ashley Grant • agrant@advocatesforchildren.org • 212-822-9548

age of 21. Eventually, Myra went on to attend college, where she did well. But, if she had been able to show her mastery of ELA standards another way – through a performance-based assessment, her coursework, or a capstone project – Myra could have spent those two years working toward her college degree rather than retaking a single test.

Research shows that high-stakes tests present a disproportionate barrier to students with disabilities, ELLs and students of color. Although exit exams are not solely responsible for disparate outcomes among these student groups, these requirements certainly affect NYC's graduation rates. For example, the City's most recent four-year graduation rate was 85.4% for Asian students, 82.3% for white students, 68.5% for Black students, and 66.2% for Latinx students; only 50% of students with disabilities and 29% of ELLs graduated in four years. A small handful of schools in NYC have waivers that allow students to substitute performance-based assessments for Regents exams. In these schools, graduation rates among students with disabilities and ELLs all exceed the citywide average, as do graduation rates of these schools' Black and Latinx students.

Our Coalition is very pleased that the New York City Council, the New York State Board of Regents, and the New York State Education Department are all considering other ways in which students like Myra could show that they are ready to graduate. We strongly urge New York to create pathways to graduation that do not rely on high-stakes tests.

New York City Must Ensure Access to All Students to Existing Pathways to A Diploma

In the meantime, we urge New York City to make changes to ensure that all students have access to *existing* pathways that do not rely solely on high-stakes tests. For example, state law allows *all students* to earn a Regents diploma by replacing one of the five required Regents exams with a credential known as the Career Development and Occupational Skills (CDOS). *Students with disabilities* who earn a CDOS may also request superintendent approval for a diploma if they have passed all of their classes and demonstrated through course grades, projects, assignments or in-class exams that they have mastered state standards in subjects in which they have not been able to pass a required Regents exam.

To earn a CDOS, all students must complete 216 hours of Career and Technical Education courses, work-based learning, and other career-development activities. However, all too frequently, members of our coalition hear from parents and families that the work-based learning experiences required for a CDOS are not available at their DOE high school. Research shows that students who participate in work-based learning experiences are more likely to attend and finish college. We urge the DOE to make changes to ensure that these school-connected, work-based learning opportunities are available to all NYC students who want them.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today, and thank you for bringing attention to the critical need for pathways to a diploma that do not rely on high-stakes tests. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma

Coordinator: Ashley Grant • agrant@advocatesforchildren.org • 212-822-9548

Statement of Purpose

The Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma is comprised of more than 70 members, including advocacy organizations, educators and families across New York State, representing a broad cross-section of students, including multilingual learners, students with disabilities, students who are overage and under-credited, and economically disadvantaged students. We have come together to urge the creation of a coherent and comprehensive New York State graduation structure that includes multiple pathways to a diploma, each of which holds all students to high expectations, provides them with quality instruction, and opens doors to career and post-secondary education opportunities. We are united by the concern that high-stakes standardized exit exams act as an unnecessary barrier to high school graduation for students who have otherwise mastered New York State standards and are college- or career-ready. We believe that measuring college- and career-readiness requires valuing multiple and equally valid ways to assess the skills needed for success in the workplace and higher education and supporting a diversity of learning styles and goals. We are also united by the concern that access to many instructional programs/pathways, such as Career and Technical Education (CTE) and work-based learning, which have been shown to improve student engagement and reduce dropout rates, has been limited for many students.

Members of the Coalition Include:

Advocates for Children of New York • Alliance for Quality Education • ARISE Coalition • Asperger Syndrome & High Functioning Autism Association • David C. Bloomfield, Esq., Professor of Educational Leadership, Law & Policy, Brooklyn College and The CUNY Graduate Center • Bronx Independent Living Services • Brooklyn Defender Services • Brooklyn Center for the Disabled • Business Teachers Association of New York State • Campaign for Tomorrow's Workforce • Capital Region Refugee Roundtable • Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York • Citizens' Committee for Children of New York • Lisa Finnerty Coggi, Parent/Advocate • Community Service Society • Council for a Strong America • Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies • Valerie DeClara, Parent • Della DeKay JD, EdD • Max Donatelli, Family Advocate • Eskolta School Research and Design • Irja Estrella, Parent • Families Together in New York State • Ann Marie Fitzpatrick, Parent • Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project • Jennifer Ghidui, Big Picture Learning • Michael Godino, Advocate • Good Shepherd Services • Roberta Grogan, Parent/Advocate • Lorri Gumanow, Parent/Special Educator • Meghan Healy • Shelley Hubal, Parent • INCLUDEnyc • Muronji Inman-McCraw • Internationals Network for Public Schools • Lawyers for Children, Inc. • Learning Disabilities Association of New York State • Jill Lewis-Flood, Parent/PIP Member • Long Island Advocacy Center • Long Island Communities of Practice • Chris McNell, Special Education Supervisor/Principal • Diana Medina Mendez, Parent • Mark Anthony Mendez • Mental Health Association of New York City • Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools • Namita Modasra • New York Council of Administrators of Special Education • New York Immigration Coalition • New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation • New York Performance Standards Consortium • New York State Association for Bilingual Education • New York State Coalition of 853 Schools • New York State Community of Practice on Family, School and Community Collaboration • New York State Disabilities Advocacy Association and Network • New York State Independent Living Council, Inc. (NYSILC) • New York State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (NYTESOL) • NY Stop Grad HST • NYU Metro Center • Regina Paleau, Parent • Parent to Parent New York, Inc. • Evelyn Perez, Parent • Catherine Phillips-Russ, Baker Victory Services • Sharon Poole, Education for Everyone Consultant • Queens Community House • Lynn Russo, Parent • SCO Family of Services • Tracey Shannon, Parent • Bruce A. Shields, PhD, Associate Professor of Education, Daemen College • Sinergia Metropolitan Parent Center • Starbridge • Amy Ming Tsai, Parent/Advocate for Special Education • United We Stand • Christian Villenas, PhD • Marcia Vogel, Parent/Advocate • Randy K. Young, Long Island Communities of Practice/Partners in Inclusivity, Inc. • YOUTH POWER!

November 2018

Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma

Coordinator: Ashley Grant • agrant@advocatesforchildren.org • 212-822-9548

Policy Goals

We call upon the New York State Education Department and the Board of Regents to take the following steps in support of multiple pathways to a diploma:

1. **Establish a commission to reexamine existing graduation pathways and options to develop a coherent system of diploma pathways.** The Commission should be coordinated by NYSED and must consist of current or recent students, parents, educators, researchers, advocates and business leaders. The Commission must include individuals with experience with learners with disabilities, multilingual learners and overage and under-credited students and with expertise in the development and implementation of work-based learning, career and technical education and performance-based assessment systems. Input from these stakeholders is critical to creating a graduation system that is fair and comprehensible and that meets the needs of all learners.

The Commission's recommendations should include plans to:

- **Build coherence and transparency into the multiple pathways system by engaging diverse stakeholders.** The current system, evolving out of a series of emergency measures, has become too complex for most students, families, and even school professionals to navigate. The system is now unduly cumbersome and relies heavily on appeals and disability-only safety nets. Any new system must be thoughtful and coherent and must provide opportunities for stakeholder feedback before any new plan is brought to the Board of Regents for a vote.
- **Align graduation requirements with the real-world skills required for success in college and career.** The Commission should identify the skills, knowledge and experiences critical for post-secondary success and should design a coherent system for students to demonstrate that they have achieved such benchmarks. The group's task should not merely be to review exit exam requirements; it should review each of the State's current exit credentials and diplomas, including the coursework and exit exams required for each. From this, the Commission should identify the changes necessary to create a system of graduation options and pathways that are equitable and accessible and that communicate meaningful skills to colleges and employers.
- **Develop and support performance-based assessments.** In lieu of each exit exam, all students should be given the option to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through State-approved, stakeholder-developed performance-based assessments or State-approved performance-based assessment systems, completing a series of tasks/projects in contexts that are familiar and relevant to their high school experiences. Schools with demonstrated capacity to develop and implement performance-based systems should continue to be supported. We recommend that the Commission consult with educators in New York State already using performance-based assessments, review the experiences of other states that have provided students with performance-based options in lieu of standardized tests, and make recommendations that include procedures and funding for developing and approving performance-based assessments for all students.
- **Create pathways to graduation for all students that require no more than two exit exams.** Although the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to assess high school students in reading/language arts, math, and science for the purposes of state accountability, no federal law requires students to pass exit exams to graduate. In fact, only 12 states currently require students to pass exit exams to graduate from high school. Of these states, New York has some of

Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma

Coordinator: Ashley Grant • agrant@advocatesforchildren.org • 212-822-9548

the most onerous testing requirements. The Commission should examine the 38 states with no exit exam requirements and consider whether any exit exam is necessary for New York students who have otherwise demonstrated mastery of State standards. Our coalition recommends that New York require no more than one English assessment and one Math assessment for graduation. Other Regents exams could remain available for students who choose to take them to graduate with Honors or an Advanced Regents Diploma and could be used for school accountability purposes, but should not serve as a barrier to graduation for any student.

- **Make all pathways available to all students.** New York's current pathways system relies heavily on disability-only exceptions and fails to acknowledge that all students need access to a variety of opportunities to demonstrate readiness to graduate. For example, students with IEPs can currently demonstrate readiness for graduation without passing any Regents exams, while students with 504 plans and those without disabilities must pass at least 4 Regents exams. The Commission's recommendations should break down these walls between student populations whenever possible by creating opportunities for all students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge without forcing them to pass high-stakes tests.
 - **Use the IEP process to ensure that students with disabilities get the supports and guidance they need to meet graduation requirements.** Rather than relying on disability-only pathways to address the significant gap in graduation rates between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers, the Commission should make recommendations to ensure that students with disabilities get the academic and transition supports they need to access each graduation pathway.
 - **Ensure access for all students to emerging instructional programming and graduation pathways.** As the State looks to expand pathways to graduation that require work-based learning, as well as instruction in Career and Technical Education, the arts, humanities, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), and other programs shown to promote student engagement and advancement towards college or career readiness, it must ensure that such programs are accessible to diverse student populations, including multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students who are overage and under-credited.
2. **Ensure access for all to the current multiple pathways system.** It is critical that students at all schools have access to each graduation option and pathway, including those that rely on work-based learning and CTE. Therefore, the State must also provide families, students and educators with the information and resources they need to make all emerging pathways and options available to all eligible students, including students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and students who are overage and under-credited.
3. **Promote transparency and monitor all aspects of the current multiple pathways system.**
- **Information:** Communication is vital for ensuring student access to any existing pathway, including the increasingly-complex appeals, safety nets, and superintendent determinations currently available to students. The State must provide students, families, and school professionals clear, concise, and easy-to-follow information on all of the alternative pathways and options that are available to students to receive a high school diploma.
 - **Outcomes:** Monitoring student outcomes with respect to each pathway is crucial to guarantee that the pathways are implemented correctly and fairly. In order to promote accountability, the State must collect and disclose detailed outcomes data, including usage data on the specific diplomas and the pathways that students have taken to earn them, as well as data that allow for comparison of outcomes across multiple student groups.

Testimony given to the New York City Council Education Committee Hearing
September 24, 2019
Alexandria Brooks
Urban Academy Laboratory High School

Transferring to a PBAT school was a breath of fresh air after being in a Regents-focused school. Teachers in my Regents school seemed more focused on improving test scores than on students' learning. We memorized material that the teacher knew the test would ask. Schools like that kill the fun in learning. A student can only stay interested for so long when even the teacher is bored because they have been repeating themselves for the past decade. That's why teens don't do homework, skip class, and drop out. The school system is not tailored to the children of today. It is rare to see the passion or nurturing care found in a PBAT school teacher in a seasoned Regents teacher.

In a Consortium school we learn about current issues, law and world events. Let me tell you about a real life situation that happened to me and how being in a PBAT school was important. I have had courses where I learned research skills, how to gather evidence and how to express my ideas. I was able to use these experiences to solve a serious problem.

In April 2018, my family, which was living in the Bronx, was relocated by the New York City's Department of Homeless Services to Paterson NJ as part of a program to provide what the City called "stable housing." There were many problems with the condition of the apartment where we were placed and we were not happy being there, but we had little choice.

In May of this year my mom received a tenancy summons saying that since she hadn't paid the rent for one month she had to appear in court. Although our rent was supposed to be covered by NYC, something had gone wrong. We were terrified; we thought we might be evicted. I remember thinking I should try to help my family, but this is a problem that deals with legal stuff -- legal rhetoric is complicated and deciphering the jargon is difficult.

Then I remembered a course I took called constitutional law. One of the teachers was a lawyer and had helped me understand the legal world. Every class we'd analyze a case individually and then come together to discuss it. We'd debate and have some homework on the topic.

Pairing research skills which I had learned in another course called *English Foundations* with the legal rhetoric, I found fundamental laws that the landlord -- a property company -- had violated. I even found that there are YouTube videos describing legal ideas. Another great help was the contact my school helped me get with a housing lawyer; she helped me find my footing.

When the day came for my Mom to go to court, I went with her. While my Mom wasn't clear about what the focus of the meeting should be, I was able to keep the discussion on track. The result was positive.

This experience showed me that my PBAT education was preparatory for life - yes, we write papers and take courses, but the way the PBATs work, you learn how to present your ideas. Topics become something you care about. You also learn how to stick up for yourself, and know when and how to ask for help. I believe PBATs teach you lifelong skills.

Testimony
New York City Council Oversight Hearing
“Breaking Testing Culture: Evaluating Multiple Pathways
To Determine Student Mastery”
September 24, 2019

Good afternoon. I am Ann Cook – Executive Director of the NY Performance Standards Consortium.

For the past 20 plus years, the Consortium has developed and documented another way to prepare students for college, career and civic participation – an approach to assessment that has not only graduated students at remarkable rates and prepared them to thrive in college, but that has also put meaning and a sense of purpose back into the classroom.

People often ask, What is this performance-based assessment system?

Here are responses to questions often raised about the Consortium’s work:

Doesn’t “assessment” mean tests?

The New York Performance Standards Consortium was founded on the belief that there was a better way to assess student learning than dependence upon standardized testing. Instead of basing a student’s future on a single test, the Consortium believes that an assessment system should reflect a fuller picture of what students know and can do and what teachers feel passionate about teaching.

To earn a Regents diploma, all students graduating from a Consortium school must complete a minimum of four performance-based assessment tasks (known as PBATs): an analytic essay on literature, a social studies research paper, an extended or original science experiment, and a demonstration of problem-solving at higher levels of mathematics.

Schools may also add tasks in creative arts, foreign language, native language, art criticism, internship, or other areas.

And yes, teachers do routinely give quizzes and interim assessments in their classrooms, but the diploma is awarded through graduation-level PBATs which are evaluated by external assessors using Consortium rubrics for both writing and oral presentations.

Does the Consortium’s approach to assessment change what happens in classrooms?

Yes it does, but in a positive way that deepens the teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom—this is the part of our system that is often overlooked, though we all know that in *other* schools, teaching to the test is the norm and ownership of what one learns or teaches is absent. In Consortium schools, the emphasis on depth over simple coverage; the requirement of extensive reading, writing, and revising; and the element of choice and student voice all thrive in the classroom.

As one student explained:

For my Science PBAT, I had to develop an hypothesis, design and conduct an experiment, write a lab report and defend my project in a discussion with a team – my team included a real scientist. My project grew out of course work on anatomy and physiology. The experiment I designed and carried out was on the Effect of Stress on Memory.

How does this system affect the work of the teacher?

Performance-based assessment has a significant impact on teachers who must commit to the many layers of work and collaboration required to make the system functional. They design challenging curriculum and tasks, respond to student interests and needs, develop and revise rubrics, and participate in Consortium and school-based professional development. Collaboration is extensive... from observing each other's classrooms, to visiting one another's schools and serving as external evaluators, sharing curriculum, and participating in "moderation" studies which confirm that student work has been assessed accurately and fairly.

As one teacher commented:

Performance assessment supports and promotes the development and sustainability of professional communities. It offers teachers the opportunity to develop challenging in-depth courses, unbound by standardized testing. There is no doubt that this has made me a better, more knowledgeable, more engaged and enthusiastic teacher.

Why do you say it's a "system?"

The Consortium's system is practitioner-developed, student-focused and externally assessed. Schools that embrace this approach are committed to four central ideas:

- a pedagogy based on inquiry teaching and in-depth learning
- a respect for the diversity of ideas and experiences
- high expectations for all students and
- the value of community and collaboration

And, as we have been saying for over two decades, since learning is complex, assessment should be too.

The Consortium's system comprises an integrated set of components, each one vital to the success of the others. They include:

- multiple modes to express learning
- Consortium-wide rubrics used in the assessment of student work
- "moderation studies" in which student work is reassessed by practitioners and educators to maintain task and rubric reliability
- extensive professional development designed to support and develop teachers' ability to use inquiry pedagogy and support performance assessment tasks
- predictive validity studies based on graduates' college performance
- external evaluation

Do you have any proof that the Consortium's system of performance-based assessment is effective?

Consortium schools serve higher proportions of Black and Latino students, students with special needs, English language learners, and students living in poverty than DOE high schools as a whole.

In fact, although we serve a wide variety of schools, our average incoming ELA and math test scores are lower than the city high schools as a whole. Yet, in 2018, the 4-year average graduation rate at Consortium high schools was 83% compared to 76% citywide.

Consortium schools boast high teacher and principal retention rates and in the most recent School Quality Reviews, every Consortium school scored Proficient or Well Developed in Curriculum, Assessment, and High Expectations.

Do students with PBATs have difficulty being admitted to college?

Consortium graduates are routinely accepted at top rated institutions of higher education and have been the recipients of Gates, NY Times, Posse, and individual college and university scholarships.

Furthermore, as a result of a Consortium-CUNY Pilot Admissions Program, nearly 400 Consortium graduates have been admitted to CUNY four-year colleges based on PBAT work and transcripts rather than standardized test scores. In 2019, 81% of our Pilot applicants were admitted to CUNY senior colleges even though their SAT scores did not meet the standard cut-off score. Previously these students would have been denied admission to one of their top three choices at a 4-year CUNY college. Further, these Pilot students are maintaining high GPAs and taking and passing accredited college math courses. Their success has had an influence on CUNY's redesign of its application process and its move away from requirements for remedial courses based on test scores.

Who authorized this performance assessment system?

A waiver created in 1995 by New York State Commissioner Thomas Sobol, and extended by unanimous votes of the NY State Board of Regents on five occasions, authorized New York State high schools belonging to the Consortium to graduate their students using a system of performance-based assessment in lieu of four of the five required State Regents exams.

NY State Commissioner Betty Rosa and Regent Judith Johnson reaffirmed this commitment in a letter to Consortium faculty writing:

"We know that each student fortunate enough to find his or her way through the doors of a Consortium school will be welcomed and supported in the quest to meet personal dreams. Consortium schools remain a beacon of promise that must never be allowed to dim. You have our complete admiration for your commitment to our children. Thank You."

Does the Consortium's system only work with certain kids?

With staff and administrative commitment, students from all communities are well-served in Consortium schools. Our 38 schools serve a diverse student population, from those living in the nation's highest poverty neighborhoods to schools in NYC's gentrified communities; also, the Consortium includes International schools serving newly arrived immigrants and schools which offer transfer students a second chance.

Since Consortium schools put a high value on student voice and discussion as a primary strategy of instruction, students from diverse backgrounds get to know and learn from one another – a critically important aspect of the city's emphasis on equity.

Here's how one student put it:

"The school I came from before this one, which was a very competitive school with all college bound students, was not a very diverse environment. So there weren't too many opportunities to hear ideas from kids who came from really different backgrounds and neighborhoods. It wasn't a place where your ideas really mattered in the classes. Discussions were pretty predictable leading to specific answers that we knew the teacher wanted us to give.

The first week I came here, I was in a class where students were having a lively discussion about the behavior of people during the Great Depression and I hear a white girl – someone with dyed red hair – make a controversial point. I'm sitting there thinking, wow, I agree with her...I didn't expect someone like her to say that...And the next person who speaks is a black guy in a hoodie; and he's agreeing with her!

That was a very important moment for me, because I suddenly realized that in this school, in this class, in this discussion, kids could learn from one another – from what others say. School wasn't just a social place; it was academic. You could agree with kids and share something uncommon – the hoodie guy and the dyed redhead could agree on a topic...people who were not like one another could agree on a point ... and the teacher could listen to the points being made without judging."

How is the Consortium's system different from other groups referring to their work as performance-based?

What makes the Consortium's system distinct from other systems currently "branded" as performance assessment—is the professionalism of its teachers and the emphasis on student voice. Neither of these vital components is possible in an assessment system that is pre-packaged, commercial, top-down, standardized, and unresponsive to the dynamic life of the classroom and the diverse possibilities of student choice. The underlying focus is on teacher professionalism and the critical point that curriculum and instruction drive the assessment and not the reverse.

What should come next?

Parents with means are able to exercise choice when selecting the pedagogical orientation of their child's school. They can choose a school that best meets their child's needs and their own approach to education. Why not public school families? Many public school parents,

too, would like to *opt in* to a school that values inquiry-based teaching and learning, depth rather than coverage, and an accountability system that focuses on performance-based assessment in lieu of high stakes standardized testing.

In the past, we have had schools conduct referendums and then go through a 2-year transition phase before joining the Consortium. While performance-based assessment may not appeal to everyone, teachers and school communities that are prepared to make the effort required should be encouraged to begin the process of transitioning to a performance-based assessment system. The New York City DOE should vigorously advocate on their behalf to persuade the Board of Regents to expand the number of schools covered by the waiver.

Submitted by Ann Cook,
Exec. Director NY Performance Standards Consortium
<http://performanceassessment.org>

Personal Testimony from Robin Broshi, Member CECD2

Tuesday, September 24, 2019

Oversight - Breaking Testing Culture: Evaluating multiple pathways to determine student mastery

I have served as a member of the CEC for School District 2 in Manhattan for over 5 years and formerly served as its President for 3 years. I am also a parent of 9th and 6th graders. My children have participated in every state assessment since 3rd grade with varying degrees of stress; I believe there is some merit standardized assessments to help districts and schools understand both their instructional strengths and the areas where they need improvement. But of course 2 days of testing is too much and the stakes remain much too high and current DOE policy around using the results for selective school admissions contributes to the high stakes climate.

In 2014 the NYS legislature passed a revision to the state's education law (see below) that mandated that NYS assessments should not account for a majority of school's admissions criteria, resulting in the adjustment of many schools' admissions rubrics to reduce the role of state assessments to ensure compliance with this new law.

However, the law also mandates that student's scores on state administered ELA and math assessments for grades 3-8 may not be placed on a student's official transcript or maintained in a student's permanent record. The law obligates districts to provide families with a clearly written notice that the results will not be part of a student's official transcript nor the student's permanent record and that the results are being provided to the families for diagnostic purposes only; I believe that the DOE is not in compliance with this aspect of the law.

Further, the DOE then uses these student records, which I believe are out of compliance with the state law and include state assessment outcomes, as part of the application process for selective school admissions, without giving families an option to withhold scores on assessments that are not designed to be used for academic placements purposes.

Although families have the option to opt-out of the assessments, the black-box nature of the admissions process leaves them worried that that selective schools might take their child's opt-out status into account during admissions decisions. Additionally, confusion around the latest implementation of ESSA in New York State leaves some families, and even some school administrators, with the misunderstanding that children who opt-out will be assigned a 1 on their individual transcript.

Earlier this month I reached out to the Office of Enrollment on behalf of some families in my district for guidance for how they may withhold the scores from their child's record during the application process and am still awaiting feedback; I have been told it will be forthcoming shortly but I am not optimistic the DOE will interpret the law in such a way that will allow families to withhold these diagnostic assessment scores in the application process. If they do allow it, will they make sure families everywhere know it is an option?

And to the extent that there are pedagogical merits to using thoughtfully designed standardized assessments, the current system of mandating that families provide assessment results for the purposes of selective admissions encourages families to provide outside instruction to students in 4th and 7th grades, muddying the utility of assessments for diagnostic purposes.

Although working through changes in how assessments are designed lives at the state level, I believe it is within the DOE's power right now to change the high-stakes climate around the assessments while also increasing their reliability by properly complying with state education law as it is currently written.

<http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/lawssrch.cgi?NVLWO>:

EDN Law Title 1 : Article 7 : Section 305 : Subsections 45 - 47

45. The commissioner shall provide that no school district or board of cooperative educational services may place or include on a student's official transcript or maintain in a student's permanent record any individual student score on a state administered standardized English language arts or mathematics assessment for grades three through eight, provided that nothing herein shall be construed to interfere with required state or federal reporting or to excuse a school district from maintaining or transferring records of such test scores separately from a student's permanent record, including for purposes of required state or federal reporting.

46. The commissioner shall provide that any test results on a state administered standardized English language arts or mathematics assessment for grades three through eight sent to parents or persons in parental relation to a student include a clear and conspicuous notice that such results will not be included on the student's official transcript or in the student's permanent record and are being provided to the student and parents for diagnostic purposes.

47. The commissioner shall provide that no school district shall make any student promotion or placement decisions based solely or primarily on student performance on the state administered standardized English language arts and mathematics assessments for grades three through eight. However, a school district may consider student performance on such state assessments provided that the school district uses multiple measures in addition to such assessments and that such assessments do not constitute the major factor in such determinations. In addition, the commissioner shall require every school district to annually notify the parents and persons in parental relation to the students attending such district of the district's grade promotion and placement policy along with an explanation of how such policy was developed. Such notification may be provided on the school district's website, if one exists, or as part of an existing informational document that is provided to parents and persons in parental relation.

**New York City Council
Committee on Education
Oversight: Breaking the Testing Culture: Evaluating multiple pathways to determine student
mastery
September 24, 2019**

Thank you for holding this hearing and for the option to submit testimony, since I cannot be there in person.

I know there are many who can speak to research-based alternatives to standardized testing. What I would like to focus on is how our society's reliance on these tests harms individuals and our culture on a psychological level and ultimately impacts the survival of democracy and the planet. This standardized testing exacerbates human impulses to 1) compete (for resources), 2) to develop values (perceive meaning) that are individualistic rather than community-based and 3) to habitually label the performance (good or gifted, average etc) of young children that prematurely defines their identity and oftentimes causes harm. In these pre-fascist times and climate crisis, education can play a significant role for the good— if schools model inclusion, there's an opportunity to shape future citizens who will prioritize care over greed, care for each other and the earth.

Asher Price writes in the Atlantic 9/19/19: "Standardized testing remains complicated- and perhaps inevitably tainted- by this country's legacy of racism". This author recently found long-hidden documents that "reveal the University of Texas' blueprint for slowing integration during the civil-rights era." (keeping black students out).

It's institutionalized segregation that is so damaging to all. As Nicole Hannah-Jones wrote this week on Twitter, "You don't have to be "racist" in order to fight to maintain policies & institutions that disadvantage black people because maintaining them advantages you personally. Your personal racism is irrelevant." @nhannahjones 9/19

Standardized tests are barriers to real opportunities. I do not/cannot care exclusively about my white child's education, because what kind of hypocritical, toxic message would that send to a child in a "progressive" family/city that claims the values of equality, dignity and justice for all. I support alternatives to standardized testing to remove barriers to the fulfillment of a successful, liberated democratic society.

Thank you,

Nina

Nina Miller

D2 Parent of a 7th grader at Wagner Middle School

TO: Council Member Treyger and members of the Education Committee

FROM: Peter Goodman

Ed in the Apple: Blogging on the Intersection of Education and Politics

RE: City Council Education Committee Oversight Hearing: Breaking Testing Culture: Evaluating multiple pathways to determine student mastery. (September 24, 2019)

In 2002 the Congress passed and the President signed the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the new law, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), required test in Mathematics and English for all children in grades three to eight. In spite of increasing dissatisfaction with the testing requirement the law was reauthorized numerous times. In 2015 the Congress passed and the President signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA <http://www.nysed.gov/essa>). The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights insisted that the testing requirements remain in the bill arguing that to remove the requirements would remove scrutiny of the subgroup achievement gaps.

In 2010 New York State, under the leadership of State Commissioner John King adopted the Common Core State Standards and the state tests were aligned to the Common Core. The proficiency rates dropped precipitously. King also promulgated a policy that linked teacher evaluation to state test results.

The tests became increasingly unpopular. The tests were challenged by education experts, the teacher union and parents. The parent opt-out movement emerged, this year 16% of students opted out of the tests. The opt-outs are concentrated on Long Island, only a handful of schools in New York City participate in opt-outs.

Federal regulations require 95% student participation, and, if the participation rates fall below 95% the state must take actions to encourage greater participation. The state has taken minimal actions.

Opt Out leaders have urged the state to take more aggressive actions to challenge the required tests, with \$1.6 billion in federal aid at stake the state has abided by federal requirements.

The state separated teacher evaluation from results; however, schools are sorted by test scores. In the months and weeks leading up to the late April/early May tests schools spend an increasing amount of time preparing students to take the state tests.

The results of the tests are not available until mid August.

Some schools construct error matrices, the most common incorrect answers and ask teachers to emphasize that particular skill; however, the tests test “standards,” not content.

ESSA does contain a section allowing for states to apply for waivers from annual testing, although no funds are provided. Two states are currently conducting alternative assessments in addition to the required tests awaiting the approval of the feds. New Hampshire is using performance tasks and Louisiana is moving to content-based instead of Common Core-based tests.

Regent Cashin has asked the commissioner to explore the possibility of exploring pilot alternative assessments for school districts or clusters of schools. The suggestion did not gain traction with the board.

In 1996 the Board of Regents, after pressure from the business community moved from dual high school diplomas, the local and the Regents diploma to a single Regents diploma. The local diploma requires passing Regents Competency Tests (RCT), tests at about the ninth grade level. The single Regents diploma was phased in over a number of years.

There is a safety net for Students with Disabilities, a 55% passing grade and the possibility of an appeal to the superintendent. The Board has also created a number of other pathways, called the 4 + 1, allowing students to offer four Regents exams and a multiple pathway area. (See graduation requirements <http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/general-education-and-diploma-requirements>)

Forty high schools in New York City have received waivers from Regents exams since the sixties. The schools are clustered in the Performance Based Assessment Consortium (<http://www.performanceassessment.org/>) Students must pass the English Regents plus providing a portfolio of student work and defend their work at a roundtable of teachers and critical friends.

The state of Vermont spent ten years experimenting student portfolios and finally abandoned the experiment; the variation in the grading of portfolios from teacher to teacher could not be resolved.

The Regents have embarked on a two year student of high school graduation requirements and exit criteria. This year each judicial district (In NYC each borough) will host a meeting led by a member of the Board of Regents to explore the issues. (See “Graduation Measures in NYS” <https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/Full%20Board%20-%20Graduation%20Measures.pdf>) A blue-ribbon commission will present recommendations to the board, and, in the spring of 2021 the board will take action. A more specific calendar will be announced in the coming months.

Thousands of students, beginning prior to kindergarten take the Gifted and Talented tests. The mayoral-appointed School Diversity Advisory Group has recommended phasing out G & T classes.

At the August Education Summit Chancellor Carranza announced another round of testing that he called “Edustats,” students would take an unspecified number of additional tests and teachers would be provided with “prescriptions” for each student. The Department posted a number of Edustats positions on their website.

I suggest that the Council discuss these issues with organization whose mission is to conduct research on NYC Schools

Jim Kemble, the Research Alliance for NYC Schools
https://research.steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance/mission

Erica Potter

When I was 12 I was introduced to New Utrecht High School while watching my brother on stage in Little Shop of Horrors. I was instantly drawn to the connection the cast on stage, which led me to apply to New Utrecht myself. I think even before deciding New Utrecht was the school I wanted to go to, I knew this theater family was what I needed, and still continue to need in my life. I've always considered myself confident, independent, and willing to speak up for myself as well as others. My theater family introduced me to Peer Mediation, which I did for the majority of my high school career, and Conflict Negotiation in my Junior, and senior year when the program was introduced.

Of course I was still just a high school student, I was a temperamental adolescent, but to this day I never been in a physical fight, and never knew many people that were. You see what these classes taught me were skills to deescalate situations, ways to present my frustrations through words while not offending others; ways to recognize my own emotion; and most importantly, who I could go to when I had any type of conf with myself, or anyone else. I was programs like Peer Mediation that paired students together that never would have socialized otherwise, like a 5' tall caucasian theater girl and a 6'2 African American Football Player to solve conflicts between other students. 2 students who typically would never have spoken to each other otherwise just due to cultural differences, who became the best of friends, myself and Darnell are still friends to this day. Peer Mediation made it OK to talk about "the weird stuff" the periods, the missed periods, feeling uncomfortable when someone of a different color gets on the elevator, recognizing that feeling, knowing that *everyone* has it, and that it's ok, but that it's about how we treat that person on the elevator. Peer Mediation and Conflict Negotiation caught me that we all have bad days, we all have our own stories, and chances are, the "big black man" that I'm afraid of on the elevator is equally as afraid of me.

Like a lot of students, I didn't have the most stable childhood. My safe space was my school. My comfort zone was being on stage, acting as someone completely different because it meant that just for that time, no matter how long it was, I got to be someone else, I got to be somewhere else, living a different life. Theater gave me a voice, and if you knew me, I was the one one stage who never needed a microphone. After Columbine there was an incident in our

school where there were rumors of a list, with specific people, and I remember going to the teachers I trusted the most to tell them, who encouraged me to go to the Dean, who was terrifying, and we had an open discussion in the assembly later that day with pretty much the entire school. In order to discuss our fears, our hurt, and our frustration. I told the person I was the one who reported her, and I reported her because I didn't know her well enough, and it was nothing personal, but if anyone was going to threaten my family, I couldn't just let that go, regardless of who they were or how they were going to feel about me as a result of my actions. On September 11th I was sitting in English class with one of my best friends from theater, spent the rest of the day with my friends from Theater and Conflict Negotiation, I remember not wanting to go home because I was more comfortable with the family these groups allowed me to create instead of going home to my own.

As an adult and a result of every program I was involved in, I am a Licensed Social Worker in State of New York and as of recently, am entering into the school system to become a part of every staff member that has changed my life and inspired me to do the best I can in this world and help others. These programs made me the advocate that I am today. These programs create families for students who don't have any, or want different ones. These programs were a crucial part on saving lives in New Utrecht High School. These programs give life to students who may feel like they don't have ones worth living.

Good morning,

I wanted to share my story and how much the theater guild did for me. I attended New Utrecht high school and was part of the theater guild during my time there and I would say it was the best thing that happened to me. I was raised by my grandmother who became ill and I had to go live with my mother who was abusing alcohol and drugs as well as she was dealing with mental health issues. When I met Sara Steinweiss who ran the theater guild it was like an angel was put in my path. The theater guild was my way to escape my reality and if it were not because of that I do not know where I would be today. The theater guild allowed me to be part of a family who cared, there was a foundation established that I could never get from home. At one point my apartment burned down and I was living in it for over 6 months the theater guild allowed me to put all my problems aside once I got on stage and those lights went on the energy and love on that stage would make up for everything else going on. When I entered high school, I was angry and bitter because of what was going on at home I remember people would ask me why I would not smile but little did they know the struggle I went through day in and day out to make it to school. I was also part of an improv class which also allowed me to be whomever I felt like being the moments we shared in that class encouraged me to go to school. School was a requirement but the theater guild was my escape from all the negative and as much as I wish there was no one else who had to experience the things I did the reality is that it is life, why not give others the opportunity to take shelter in programs like the theater guild which would encourage them to never give up like it did with me.

Respectfully,

Trina Nurse

<trinanurse@gmail.com>

Hi,

I am a black parent and I am writing because I SUPPORT THE TESTING CULTURE AND DO NOT VIEW IT AS EVIL OR RACIST LIKE YOU CORRUPT OPPORTUNISTS HAVE PORTRAYED IT.

We need standardized testing first and foremost to measure how our children are doing and where they need help. Getting rid of "testing culture" just because we don't like the results is like throwing away the newspaper because we don't like the news - it hides the problem rather than fixes anything.

I support higher educational outcomes for our children, and I am shocked that the NYC Council is happy with >80% of NYC's black and latino high school graduates not being able to read at a 4th grade level - these graduates will never find good work and are entering society completely helpless financially. They will get preyed upon by unethical car dealers and bankers (who know these kids can't do math) and this creates an even larger problem over time.

Just think about the massive benefits to society if we can raise our children's average math & reading levels to 12th grade instead of 4th grade - without testing, we cannot measure and fix anything.

Moreover, I support SHSAT schools - they are no different than sending the best athletes to the best training grounds to get even better. We are underrepresented not because of direct racism or white supremacy, as some clueless ivory tower social justice activists like to think, but because our leaders have deemed it wise to keep lowering classroom standards in our poorest neighborhoods such that disastrous outcomes are inevitable. For instance, ideas like restorative justice that lack common sense are holding entire mostly black classrooms back for the sake of a distressed minority of children who should be helped without disrupting or delaying the education of others.

What you have now are leaders and activists seeking a quick fix for a major crisis that HAS NO QUICK FIX. Getting rid of tests to hide an answer we don't like is NOT a fix. Getting rid of entrance exams to some of the country's greatest schools on the basis of supposed racism is NOT a fix (are all those hard working asians racist? I don't think so. Many of them start out

even poorer than us). Who are the idiots who think shuffling some asians and whites into our schools would help anyway?

I decry the tearing down of academic excellence simply because our leaders are failing our kids. An average 4th grade reading level for black high school graduates is a sign of utter incompetence from the DOE - instead of preaching from a soapbox all day, both Deblasio & Carranza would be well served by actually working to improve overall educational level of our children, which should not be hard.

I support academic excellence so I support school testing.

If you dismantle G&T, school testing, and SHSAT, you are simply further dumbing down our classrooms rather than addressing root problems. Again, we are beset not by white supremacy, but by utter incompetence from the DOE.

Regards,

Jermaine Warren

<jermaine.warren@outlook.com>

September 23, 2019

Dear NYC Council,

The grades 3-8 New York State standardized testing program is a farce and should be abolished. Recent “changes” to it have been meaningless. Since 2013, when Common Core-aligned high stakes ELA (English-language arts) and math tests were first introduced, I’ve been documenting their negative impact on student learning on my blog: criticalclassrooms.wordpress.com.

Over the years, I’ve painted a grim picture of how grades 3-8 state testing, despite the New York City Department of Education’s claim that the tests are just one academic measure, lies at the heart of schooling in New York City. In many schools, particularly Title I schools with low test scores, most decisions revolve around tests and test scores. Curriculum, including *The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project*, closely resembles test prep. There are fewer opportunities for enrichment, project-based learning and play, and teachers have little freedom to teach. In addition, testing students annually in grades 3-8 is excessive and unnecessary. The state tests are poorly designed, confusing and developmentally inappropriate. Test scores are manipulated by the state therefore rendering them unreliable.

Our multilingual learners, officially called English-language learners (ELLs), are particularly burdened by state testing. The NYSITELL, an assessment we use to identify ELLs, is essentially a content-based reading comprehension test that doesn’t accurately reflect a student’s proficiency in English. For example, it assumes that a beginning first grader is already reading and writing. If this is not the case, an English-proficient student could unnecessarily be labeled an ELL.

ELLs are required to take an annual English-language proficiency assessment called the NYSESLAT. The NYSESLAT is arguably worse than the state ELA test, and it’s comprised of four testing sessions, which means four days of testing. For example, the kindergarten NYSESLAT has 57 questions. The reading passages are largely non-fiction, and some of the topics are obscure, outside of the students’ everyday life experiences. Like the NYSITELL, the NYSESLAT is more of a content assessment than a true language test. It’s also excessive in its use of close reading. The listening section, for example, requires students to listen to passage excerpts over and over again. Testing at the proficiency level is the primary way an ELL can exit the ENL (English as a New Language) program. I have students that will remain at the advanced (expanding) level on the NYSESLAT because they don’t score well on standardized tests, and they will have to take the NYSESLAT year after year. Like the Common Core ELA test, the results of the NYSESLAT tell me nothing about what my students know, and preparing them for these absurd tests takes away from authentic and meaningful learning.

In her latest book, *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*, Bettina L. Love argues that our schools should be

places where students thrive, not just survive. Centering schooling on highly flawed state tests, that aren't even created by teachers, is not thriving. In fact, it is "spirit-murdering," to use Love's term. Teachers, principals and students are feeling more demoralized than inspired. School does not have to be this way. There are viable alternatives to annual standardized testing. We must demand an end to the current standardized testing program in New York. Our students deserve so much better than what they are currently getting.

Sincerely,

Katie Lapham

NYC public school teacher and parent

Brooklyn, NY

Email: katielapham1@gmail.com

Blog: <https://criticalclassrooms.wordpress.com>

Dear Committee,

I am deeply grateful that you are holding this hearing on high stakes testing in NYC schools and affording me the opportunity to testify. The ill effects of high stakes testing are framed as an issue relevant to certain populations (ELLs, students with housing insecurity, children of color, students with IEPs). And it is true that these populations are effected disproportionately. However I would like to suggest that testing effects every child in the public education system, their intellectual and emotional development, their understanding of learning, not to mention future prospects (career, higher education etc).

I am the mother of a fourth grader who is not an English Language Learner, nor does he have an IEP. He comes from a family who supports him in his education and prizes inquiry. I want to bring his story before the committee as an example of the far reaching effects of testing on our system. Because of the dismal scores on standardized tests, the common core curriculum has transformed kindergarten from a year of acclimation and play into what once was reserved for 1st grade. In this attempt to 'make up' for these poor outcomes, children have been deprived of a crucial year of development through play that could potentially instill a lifelong love of learning and intellectual curiosity alongside greater socialization. My son was not ready to read and write in kindergarten and repeated attempts to instill, cajole or force him to learn produced merely passing results (so he didn't have to repeat K). In first grade when he was developmentally ready he started reading easily. A month later when it suddenly clicked why writing could be of use that too followed.

Our kindergarten experience was only amplified in third grade, his first testing year. Although we go to a school that claims not to teach from the beginning of the year we experienced another shift. We saw homework and content changing all not so subtly geared to the test. This is in addition to the actual test prep months in the classroom. The week of the tests the entire 3rd grade and its usually jubilant teachers seemed "shell shocked". In a year where personal curiosity and interests flourish, students were required to master rote lessons that seemed out of reach for many. This is not a condemnation of our teachers as they try to work around this but the amount of resources necessary to get some kids over this hurdle does not allow for enough individual focus on each student. In this year my son when from a kid who's grand wish at the beginning of the year was to learn long division to saying that he hated math. In this year, I witnessed many of his friends say (this is a quote) 'school is jail'.

Instead of trusting teachers to evaluate children's needs and children to learn at their own pace standardized testing forces everyone fall in line with unattainable and counterproductive requirements. I want to clearly state that from the moment my child stepped into kindergarten he has been effected by testing. Standarized tests waste valuable lesson time, devalue personal engagement and a teacher's professional assessment skills and cost millions of dollars. Standardized tests are actively destroying the seeds of intellectual curiosity. In a system where resources are scarce this is not where our focus should be to create lifelong learners and happy, valuable members of society.

Many Thanks,
Tamara Gayer

Thank you for accepting my testimony to be entered into the record.

Testing for mastery has been used now for over two decades, and has been accelerated in NYS under the roll out of Common Core. The purpose is to improve reading skills for those at risk. In NYS, students with learning disabilities still have the 'test read' accommodation in order to try and pass high stakes regents exams. It seems that testing for reading ability is not solving the issues around reading ability if we still need to have 'test read' for students with language based disabilities. The resources used to develop and administer the tests should be used to place reading specialists into every school. Reading specialists would insure that students are screened (not a meaningless on-line test) for language based disabilities and reading delays. Reading specialists would also be tasked with providing students with reading instruction, including Orton-Gillingham, comprehension, phonics and fluency.

At the high school level, students who struggle with test anxiety, language based disabilities, and other learning issues, but have the cognitive skills to hold down a job, study a trade, or go on to the right college are tied to passing five high stakes exams which are offered three times a year. This is an expensive endeavor in NYS with little benefit. Yes, students should be held to a high standard of meaningful curriculum, but passing five regents exams should not be the barrier to a high school diploma and the chance for a fulfilling and meaningful life. Retaking regents exams, or being mandated into AIS to develop test taking strategies take away students opportunities in other classes including vocational, arts, or additional classes in a subject area that is meaningful to the student.

Thank you,

Christine Zirkelbach

Hudson Valley Parent Educator Initiative

I am a former Community Education Council member of District 2 and a current member of Community Board 4's Arts, Education and Culture Committee. I have an eighth grader who attends one of the city's segregated screened middle schools in District 2.

My child's school is a perfect example of a high stakes testing environment. The focus on test scores and grades exacerbates the anxiety that middle school aged children already feel due to puberty and peer pressure. One of the ways the school measures student anxiety is by viewing the number of times students log in daily to check their scores on the online grading system. My child who loved her elementary years is now dogged by the notion that her test results are a determining factor of success or failure because "that's all the school cares about." As a result, she has become adept at test taking having picked up on strategies in memorization. The problem is that memorization is not learning and I am concerned that my child is losing sight on the value of education and mastery of content.

I have also witnessed first hand how high stakes testing is contributing to the segregation of District 2 schools. As you know, wealthier and more resourced parents with access to tutoring in their neighborhoods are preparing their children as early as three years old for the G&T exam and entry to G&T programs serve as a pipeline to screened middle schools. I know parents with kids in G&T programs that are struggling because they were not properly assessed due to the nature of the test and need to rely on tutors their entire elementary school years to remain in the program. The reliance on a single test method at four years old (or any age) is not a proven method to accurately assess aptitude, which is why universities use multiple measures. As a result of District 2 screening methods, which are not standardized by the DOE or transparent to families, my child is separated from her Black and Latino sister and brothers. In a school of 300 students, there isn't a single Black boy.

High stakes testing in District 2 has created a gladiator like atmosphere where parents compete for bragging rights to what they perceive as the best schools. This admissions process is a disservice to our children who are not being prepared to live and work in a global economy. The question remains, what are we going to do about it?

I appreciate your time, passion and commitment to ensuring that every New York City child receives a high quality education.

Best,

Josephine Ishmon

September 27, 2019

Testimony regarding the amount of testing in our NYC schools

To the NYC Department of Education, Chancellor Carranza and Mayor de Blasio:

Endless and non-stop amounts of testing our children does not improve their education or their test results. What the DoE is considering is yet an additional misuse of our public dollars and our children's time to gather data and other information that will not give these children a better educational experience. A clear waste of money and time, parents and teachers can agree that hands on, engaging curriculum will give better results and a more full life to students. Students living in poverty with lack of resources do not need more testing, they need more opportunities. Teachers are the best resource for how our children are doing in school, and smaller class sizes will guarantee better results.

I was not a good test taker. I was, however, extremely talented in the arts and above all, learned through doing. Most children learn best and can explain what they learn best by being shown and then explaining what they experienced. (Most grown ups are the same way). When a child's day, or even 4 times per year, is spent taking measurements, the range of what is taught becomes limited. We as parents do not want to see our children's learning environment shrink to even fewer offerings. Where is the recess? Where is the PE? Where are the Arts? Creating a rich environment and smaller class sizes is the secret to better learning, not testing, testing, testing. To some, this is no secret, but perhaps this is lost in the Department of Ed.

I wish those in the DoE would actually hear the voices of educators, parents, and students who are clamoring for more experiential learning and less testing. The bureaucrats in the DoE seem completely disconnected from what the honest to goodness needs are for students. The willingness to spend money for more testing while services to students and teachers are being cut is not only short sighted, but frankly abusive. Kids who are not engaged in their school life will end up on the streets and finding ways to distract themselves from the boredom of testing. If you really cared about these children and their future, you would spend more time and money in ways that nurture, not torture children. Where are the voices of those on the ground, not those sitting in offices removed from real school life?

We can show that graduation rates in the Consortium schools and their student's success in getting into college is superior to schools that focus on testing. At the elementary level, there are schools that do not focus on testing and those students rise to the top as they are constantly engaged in real learning. For once, the DoE should put the needs of students first, focus on fully funding our schools and outfitting all students with enrichment programs, and keep their interests out of the pockets of the testing corporations. NYC kids have been tested to death, and still, communities of under-served children suffer. Stop testing and give these communities the tools to succeed instead!

Respectfully submitted,

Janine Sopp

NY City Council Education Committee Hearing

RE: Oversight - Breaking Testing Culture: Evaluating multiple pathways to determine student mastery

Written testimony submitted by:

Takiema Bunche Smith, MPA, MS_{Ed}

Executive Director, Center on Culture, Race and Equity (CCRE) at Bank Street College of Education

September 23, 2019

"I got reprimanded because my Kindergartners took too long to come down the steps in the last fire drill we had. Many of them have a hard time walking down the steps with alternating feet (a developmental milestone for 18 month olds), so it slowed us down. They don't have recess, so they don't get a chance to play in ways that supports their physical development. What am I supposed to do?"

-K, Kindergarten teacher, classroom of majority kids of color, 2014

My name is Takiema Bunche Smith, and I am the Executive Director of CCRE, a Center that provides research based professional development to educational institutions and communities in order to support equitable learning environments that allow all children to thrive and reach their full potential. Additionally, I am a permanently NYS and NYC certified educator with a Masters in Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Urban Education Policy, and a third Masters in nonprofit leadership and management. I am also a parent who has opted my child out of the NYS high stakes standardized exams from grades 3 through 8, and selected a high school for him that is a part of the [NYS Performance Standards Consortium](#)¹. **I am writing to share some reflections on the harm caused by the high stakes standardized testing culture that currently exists in many schools across the United States, and within the NYC DOE, and to share some recommendations for how to shift this culture to be more developmentally and culturally appropriate for our youngest learners.**

In 1997 I entered the teaching profession, and a first grade classroom that looked very different than it does today. Back then, my classroom had a block area, a dramatic play area, tables and 25 chairs, a large carpet area that served as gathering space for my students, and a library area. My students, (nearly all Black, Latino, and residents in under-resourced communities), had weekly music and art classes, daily outdoor play, and participated in a gardening program designed and run by the in-house science teacher. In 1997, my classroom, curriculum and the accompanying assessments of six year olds was developmentally appropriate and took into account the individual needs and cultures of the children and families I served.

As "No Child Left Behind" became federal law, it brought with it the mandates of high stakes standardized testing which created the harmful domino effect of a narrowed test-prep focused curriculum, increased rigidity of learning environments, and the harmful push-down effects of this reality

¹ [NYS Performance Standards Consortium](#)

into the early grades and years. Research has shown that “testing culture” has had a profoundly negative impact on children in early childhood education (birth through 8 years old, or 2nd grade) and has disproportionately negative impacts on Black and Latino students, as well as those from under-resourced communities and who are English Language learners². These effects are felt by children as young as Kindergarten, where they often experience an overemphasis on isolated skill and domain development; essentially, “teaching to the test”³ To illustrate these concerns, the following quotes were captured in my conversations with various Kindergarten teachers over the last 4 years, all of whom work with nearly all students are of color and live in under-resourced communities.

“I will never forget the year that I went in to set up my classroom and at the end of the day, my principal came in to tell me that he was getting rid of the sand and water table, because my Kindergartners didn’t have time to play. I begged him not to, but the next day when I showed up, it was gone. I cried with frustration, over what my five year olds had lost.”

-B, Kindergarten teacher (30 years within DOE), 2016

“Back when I transitioned from teaching Pre-K to K, we had to use the ReadyGen curriculum which asked Kindergartners to listen to stories (no pictures) and bubble in answers to related questions with a No. 2 pencil. Children got bored because they didn’t understand the majority of what we asked them. For the Go Math curriculum, there was a test that had about 80 questions to assess every standard. Teachers took a week or more to get this data in. Instead of building relationships with five year olds, we traumatized them with this nonsense. Everything about those assessments were inappropriate.”

A, Kindergarten teacher (former Pre-K, and toddler teacher), (14 years within DOE), 2014.

Assessments of student learning are important tools to help teachers understand what children know, can do, and where they need additional support in academic, social and emotional domains. High quality early childhood assessment, as I was trained to do at Bank Street College, is grounded by educational research literature, and involves teachers conducting:

- close observations and low inference recording
- interviews of children as they play and participate in learning activities to understand how they are thinking
- asking thoughtful questions to build upon existing knowledge and push their thinking to higher levels (Vygotsky, 1978)⁴.

² http://fairtest.org/sites/default/files/racial_justice_and_testing_12-10.pdf

³ <http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/EquityEarlyEdBrief.pdf>

⁴ https://zodml.org/sites/default/files/%5BAlex_Kozulin,_Boris_Gindis,_Vladimir_S._Aqeyev,_S_0.pdf#page=55

The administration of developmentally appropriate assessments on a regular basis allows educators to understand what content children have mastered, and what needs additional review or revisiting. “Quality assessment is a process of inquiry. It requires gathering information and setting conditions so that the classroom, school, and community become centers of inquiry where students, teachers, and other stakeholders can examine their learning—individually and collaboratively—and find ways to improve their practice.”⁵

Currently, early childhood classrooms in NYC Early Childhood Centers and NYC DOE Pre-K classes have committed to using developmentally appropriate curriculum and assessments by providing play based learning experiences and through the use of anecdotal observations and portfolio development. Teachers in these early childhood settings undergo annual and ongoing professional development sessions to ensure that they understand how to effectively implement and use the data gathered from their assessments of children’s learning and development. Classrooms for two, three and four year olds in NYC look more similar to the first grade class I taught in 1997, than the current K and 1st grade classes do today. In essence, we see that Kindergarten is considered to be “the new first (or second) grade”, with grave consequences for children’s right to experience a developmentally appropriate a meaningful educational experience.

While conversations have recently begun about how to begin to build a stronger bridge between the DECE and K-12 systems, it is important to acknowledge how jarring this separation has been for children as they move from Pre-K to K. The implications for children experiencing this major shift, from play based to seat-based learning experiences, and from authentic, developmentally appropriate assessments to developmentally inappropriate and often computer based assessments. The reality is that children’s developmental capabilities have not collectively changed over the last 20 years. Testing culture has grown in spite of a plethora of research and child development data that shows that it is harmful to all children, and particularly harmful to children of the youngest ages.⁶

I offer three recommendations to address and break “testing culture”:

First, look to Early Childhood Education research and best practices to lead the way. High quality early childhood programs support the holistic growth and development of children within the context of their families and communities. Authentic, culturally and developmentally assessment practices are at the core of the early childhood field. They can guide the reshaping of curriculum and assessment in K-12

5

<https://www2.ncte.org/resources/standards/standards-for-the-assessment-of-reading-and-writing-revised-edition-2009/>

⁶ <https://dev.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/fact-sheet-on-testing-final.pdf>,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/03/15/what-educators-know-about-teaching-young-children-but-policymakers-ignore/>

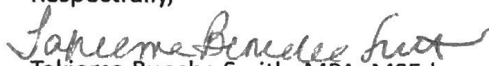
grades to be more meaningful and accurate. Institutions like Bank Street College of Education⁷ have been at the forefront of developing research based, high quality curriculum and assessment measures along with teacher and leader professional development.

Second, address the issue of continuity of educational and assessment experiences for children moving from early childhood settings, including pre-k, to Kindergarten and beyond. Early childhood spans from birth to eight years old, which is generally considered to be second grade. This is a vulnerable and significant time in a child's development. If the Department of Education is committing financial, human and training resources into implementing developmentally and culturally appropriate assessment practices in birth-pre-K classes, it is only logical that there be continuity embedded within the transition into assessments between pre-K and K and beyond.

Third, increase access to culturally responsive education professional development sessions, materials, resources to teachers, leaders and parents of children from birth through 12th grade. High stakes standardized tests are not measures of intelligence or high quality teaching and learning, and were in fact, originally designed to "prove" the lesser intelligence of people of color⁸. Standardized test scores simply tell us who has the most access to income, resources, and test prep. The ultimate assessment goals of schools should not be to increase the standardized test scores of Black and Latino students, for example, because raised scores for these racial groups are not a proxy for racial equity. The lower scores of specific racial groups are a manifestation of the root causes of inequity, which are related to generations of policies, practices and attitudes that are unexamined and uphold bias and racism within society and within schools. High quality, sustained professional development focused on culturally responsive and anti bias education shifts mindsets, practices and policies toward equity, and toward a holistic view of all children. With equity at the center, schools can truly become sites of invigorating and transformative educational experiences for all children with respect for their full humanity and anchored by meaningful assessments that support teachers to guide their continued learning and development.

I welcome any questions and further discussion of the testimony submitted above.

Respectfully,


Takiema Bunche Smith, MPA, MEd
tbunchesmith@bankstreet.edu
(347) 423-0573

⁷ [Bank Street College of Education](http://www.bankstreet.edu)

⁸ <http://www.nea.org/home/73288.htm>

**New York City Council
Committee on Education**

**Oversight: Breaking the Testing Culture: Evaluating multiple pathways to determine student
mastery**

September 24, 2019

Dear City Council members:

Thanks to Council Member Treyger for highlighting the importance of this issue. I'm honored to have the chance to respond as a former school and college counselor, as an author, writer, researcher, and professor of School Counselor Education for 27 years, 22 of those in the Bronx at CUNY's Lehman College.. There is no agreed upon definition of intelligence. There is no agreement about the best type of testing nor assessment in K-16 education. There is, however, an extraordinary history of racism and classism and sexism and ableism that has shrouded the testing industry ever since inception. The best assessments for students of all ages include multiple measures--never one test score. Yet, too many colleges (including CUNY, where I teach), NYC's specialized high schools, and many more use one standardized test as a measure of who gets in and who does not. This is wrong. There is no educational theory that backs it up and plenty of research that shows how damaging it is to students of color, women, persons with disabilities, bilingual students, and students of multiple nondominant identities. Who backs it include the folks with the greatest wealth, privilege, and power, who have traditionally used standardized testing to game the system at the loss of less powerful and less privileged voices. If we wish to be truly equitable, we'd ban all standardized testing and seek out authentic assessment instead--essay exams, project-based learning, narratives, all used by progressive educators worldwide to challenge the testing hierarchy. Some schools have gone grade-less using narrative evaluations instead. So there is no reason to continue using bad tests that discriminate against students by race, class, and gender. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any further questions.

Warmly and best,

Stuart Chen-Hayes, Ph.D., NCC, LCPC (IL) Professor/Program Coordinator, Counselor
Education/School Counseling CUNY Lehman College CLLSE Dept., Carman Hall B-20,
250 Bedford Pk Blvd W, Bronx, NY 10468

stuartc@lehman.cuny.edu



91271
MyLindaLee
64625812
ontheher
Kids e

So Whom it
may concern

I am the mother
of four children
my oldest is 33 he
completed a G.E.D.
my ^{second} 25 yr old ^{son} completed
alternative and got Valaductum
after battling cancer for
3 1/2 yrs
then theres Brittany my
23 yr old
R she attended a 21
yr old program from
the age of 7-21
and to date has two
completion certificates
2017 - 2019
Not H.S. diploma
my ^{3rd} son is in the 11th grade

Exhibit
on the hearts of
my friends
28W1315+6AN

Should be an
Alternative to High School
Diploma

Reach the age of 16-17
Graduate
get a trade or go to
College

The Atypical

Special needs

go to school
7-14

→ vocational
training or not
continue going to school
till 21,
Graduate -

not → more time than
go to a Day program

60162581235

Every one is saying

M. Lee

NO

Have you ever went
to school for years
and when you finish
there is nothing Society
will allow you to do
how is it you Graduate
But with ACCESS VR
AHR C Supportive Employers
they tell you you
need a GED or
High School Diploma

what type of
Madness is this
(Just go to a day
Program)

NO - if you are a

person with intellectual
Disability and you have

on the hearts of kids & who can

● I in school four years
and now when you want
to start your career

M.lee

You are told you can't
wait go to school for

14 ~~15~~ 17 year

and now because

● No thing other

than a day program

was put in place

as a recommendation

You can not
get a job a trade

or go to college

3.
M. Hall

How do you get a
GED if you were
never prepared for a GED

How do you get your
High School Diploma if

you graduated with a
certificate) why

if you go to school
and learn what

it is for you to

learn then allow you

to be certified so

you can go on

with your life

4.

You don't give ^{most} persons
with intellectual disabilities
High School Diplomas

* Solution
Allow for Alternative
Diploma

Meet me where I am at.

I've gone to school

Long enough give me
what I need to go

to my next level

All doors are shut

The system is making
money to starve the

Diagnostic

You propose A test
that the city partnered
with to access
our persons with a
disability and or
intellectual

to Cap Stop at
Entities that do
not afford them
equal opportunities
in the work place
or in trade

Wanting to go to a
trade shall you need

6/

Let me Learn what
I can learn

Let me Be who I
want to be

My Potential my

Life my goal

But when you keep
the rule At

H.S. Diploma

there is NO

Life Secular

for me just

money for you
Capital



Dermott Myrie <dmyrie@taps391.org>

Fwd: Please update my version of testimony about testing with replaced broken link I sent prior

1 message

D Myrie <dmyrie2@gmail.com>
To: Dermott Myrie <dmyrie@taps391.org>

Tue, Sep 24, 2019 at 3:40 PM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: D Myrie <dmyrie2@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Sep 23, 2019 at 8:59 PM
Subject: Please update my version of testimony about testing with replaced broken link I sent prior
To: <MTreyger@council.nyc.gov>

Dear Chairman Treyger and all City Council Members,

As a member of the Movement Of Rank and File Educators - the social justice caucus of the UFT the time is right to end high stakes testing period. It must be stated that our caucus has been at the forefront for years as allies of the OPT-OUT movement, numerous social justice grassroots movements, and people of good moral conscience educating parents and communities about the evils of high stakes testing. The demands of testing have placed so many stressors on teachers, students, and their families. Students are labeled "BAD" because low state test scores are indicators for this label. Schools were closed and or being truncated because of low test scores. Personally I have been at PEP meetings for years trying to make the argument that tests fail students but finally, we have a listener in you. Chairman Treyger with you being an educator and lawmaker it makes a difference. We have crossed paths so many times on the social justice trails in NYC and I hope this is the one that will elevate the voice of students. Students do not even have a voice in the conversation about testing which is real sad. Testing is problematic as it leads to displacement of teachers when schools are closed because of low scores. Psychologically there is research that shows that overtesting affects students' self-esteem when they fail and it takes years to reverse this psychological harm. My colleague and lieutenant gubernatorial Green Party candidate and a member of MORE- here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBev5SQhVRE> . I hope that the transcript is available as well. The link is available to colleagues in schools around the country.

In closing, there is so much to say but high stakes testing is profit-driven, it demeans children who have a bad test day, does not take into account that Black and Brown students especially are victims of systemic oppression and racist motives in a testing frenzy to elevate the haves and blame the have nots. I join with my ally Prof Chen Hayes from Lehman College and declare that we end testing, PARCC and invest in teacher-driven authentic assessments for students. Run the testing corporations out of town. In Solidarity.

D.Myrie

"The strongest democracies flourish from frequent and lively debate, but they endure when people of every background and belief find a way to set aside smaller differences in service of a greater purpose" - President Barack Obama

**New York City Council Committee on Education
Oversight Hearing on Breaking Testing Culture:
Evaluating multiple pathways to determine student mastery**

September 24, 2019

We would like to thank the New York City Council Committee on Education for holding this important oversight hearing on Breaking Testing Culture: Evaluating multiple pathways to determine student mastery.

We testify today to highlight the need for more equitable and meaningful ways for all students, including students with disabilities, to be evaluated on mastery of topics and indicators of college and career readiness. The determination of a student's mastery and/or ability to graduate should be based on the results of multiple types of performance assessments, not just the results of standardized tests, such as the Regents exams.

New York State is one of only eleven states in the country that require students to pass an exit exam in order to graduate. Regents exams should not be the only criteria in deciding who gets to receive a diploma. Many students with disabilities in New York City struggle with passing the five Regents exams or approved alternatives despite knowing the content well and having competitive GPAs.

INCLUDEnyc (formerly Resources for Children with Special Needs) has worked with hundreds of thousands of individuals since our founding 36 years ago, helping them navigate the complex special education service and support systems, so that young people with disabilities can be included in all aspects of New York City life.

Over the years, we have directly helped many families and young people with disabilities and we have seen countless students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) not receive Regents diplomas. Typical reasons include the lack of available Regents instruction or individualized academic support for students with IEPs. Often we have seen these students failing a Regents exam by merely a couple points, denying them a diploma in New York.

We believe there should be more flexibility in how students are assessed. We recommend Performance Based-Assessments (PBAs) for students that maintain the same high academic standards as Regents exams, but allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and mastery based on their individual learning style.

-more-

PBAs assess students in different ways, such as writing research papers, oral presentations, performing arts, or compiling a portfolio. Including objectively reviewed PBAs for student assessment in New York will help close the twenty-four percent graduation gap between general education students and students with disabilities in the City.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these important matters. We look forward to working with you to improve equity and access for all students with disabilities in New York City.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Glassman
Executive Director

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DELMONT MYRIE

Address: 500 GRAND CONCOURSE 6TH

I represent: MORE YFI - movement of Takya file

Address: BX. NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Suean Harwitz

Address: 160 E 3rd St

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/2019

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KEMALA KARMEN

Address: 553 8TH ST #3L BK 11215

I represent: NYC OPT OUT and myself!

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/2019

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KATE YOURKE

Address: 74 1/2 POWERS STREET BKLYN 11211

I represent: my nonprofit Make: STEAM + myself

Address: SAME

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: _____

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JOHANNA MILLER

Address: 175 BROAD STREET 19th FL

I represent: NYCLU

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Rothman

Address: 720 Ft. Washington Ave. 10040

I represent: Eskotta School Research & Design

Address: 50- Broad St. NYC 10004

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Larissa Tejada (student)

Address: 351 W. 18th St.

I represent: New York Performance Standards Consortium

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeannie Ferreri - Principal

Address: 351 W. 18th Street

I represent: New York Performance Standards Consortium

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brian Pimentel (Student)

Address: 351 W. 18th St.

I represent: NY State Performance

Address: standards Consortium

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kelany dela Cruz Reyes

Address: 351 W. 18th St.

I represent: New York Performance Standards

Address: Consortium

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chyanne Peña (Student)

Address: 351 W. 18th St.

I represent: NY Performance Standards

Address: consortium

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lucca Coehlo (Student)

Address: 351 W. 18th St.

I represent: New York Performance Standards

Address: Consortium

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Belinda Lin

Address: 72-68 Calamus Ave Woodside NY 11377

I represent: INCLUDEX NYC

Address: 116 E 16th St New York NY 10003

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Allan Cheng

Address: Acting Superintendent

I represent: NYC Consortium Outward

Address: Bureau of International

Communications

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/2019

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Almet Brown

Address: Senior Executive Director

I represent: Policy + Evaluation

Address: NYC DOE

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/29/2019

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Linda Chen

Address: Chief Academic Officer

I represent: NYC DOE

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alan Chen

Address: Acting Superintendent

I represent: NYC DOE + Evaluation

Address: NYC Consortium, International
Outward Bound Schools

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 09-24-2019

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tasfia Rahman

Address: 50 Broad St NY, NY 10005

I represent: Coalition for Asian American Children &

Address: Families

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alex Brody

Address: Ulyan Acorn

I represent: PBAT/ Consortium

Address: 670 New Jersey Ave. Brooklyn NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Robin Broshi

Address: 211 E. 35th St NYC 10016

I represent: Member of CEC2 - personal testimony

Address: _____



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

40

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mylinda Lee

Address: 28 W 131 St 6A NY 10037

I represent: Intellectual Disability Arise

Address: NYC

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lorri Gumanow

Address: 115 Eastern Pky #1B, Bklyn

I represent: I'm a parent and retired DOE teacher

Address: NA

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael McQuillan

Address: 414 Albemarle Road 2E, Bklyn 11218

I represent: Leades High School at Lafayette Campus

Address: 2630 Benson Avenue, Brooklyn 11214

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Peter Goldman

Address: 320 E 25 St NY 10010

I represent: myself Ed in the App

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/2019

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ashley Grant, ~~Coalition for a Diploma~~ ^{Multiple Pathways}

Address: 151 W. 30th Street, 5th fl, NY NY 10001

I represent: Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Emily Carrarazana

Address: 2175 Hudson Terrace Fort Lee NJ

I represent: Class Size Matters

Address: 124 Waverly Pl NY NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9.25.19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Gaboury

Address: 320 Senator St #3 11220

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ANTHONY RAMOS

Address: FORMER STUDENT @ New UTRECHT

I represent: PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SARA STEINWEISS

Address: FORMER DJE teacher

I represent: personal testimony

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ann Cook

Address: 670 West End

I represent: NY Performance Std. Consortium

Address: 270 St Mark 10025

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jonathan Katz, Ed.D.

Address: 50 PTW 4H

I represent: NY Performance Standards Consortium

Address: 317 E 67th St NYC

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms