



NEWS RELEASE

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Superintendents Applaud Governor Spitzer's Education Agenda, Question Omission of Teachers from New Accountability

ALBANY, NY – January 29, 2007 – The New York State Council of School Superintendents today commended Governor Spitzer's education reform agenda.

Council Executive Director Dr. Thomas Rogers said, "Effective education reform demands actions across many fronts, not silver-bullet solutions like the No Child Left Behind Act. We are tremendously encouraged by the ambitious agenda the Governor has put forward."

Rogers added, "We see real evidence that the Governor is serious about achieving practical reforms by his selection of Manny Rivera as his chief education aide. Last year, our organization was proud to recognize Dr. Rivera as the New York State superintendent of the year. In his new role, he will bring practical, real world expertise to the development of state education policy."

Rogers also praised the Governor's plans for school finance reform. "The Governor has committed to providing significant additional state aid to schools, especially those serving the neediest children," Rogers noted. "He is also pledging a simplified funding system and multi-year commitment. Both will help school leaders to do their best planning and management."

"We also commend the Governor for acknowledging that property tax relief and school finance reform are two sides of the same coin and that education reform will not be possible without fixing the burdensome and inequitable property tax system," Rogers said.

Rogers added, "Governor Spitzer's agenda includes many of the reform ideas we proposed last September in our Policy Report, *An Education Speech for the Next Governor*. We applaud his calls for instituting value-added assessment, updating state standards, adding more instructional time, providing fiscal relief for districts coping with charter schools, expanding prekindergarten, and promoting innovations in teacher compensation, including career ladders, merit pay, and bonus pay for teachers in hard to staff schools and subjects."

"These are exactly the things that superintendents have been implementing district-by-district to raise student achievement," Rogers noted. "The Governor's agenda will help us accelerate their use in all schools."

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“The Governor said that school accountability must ‘run through the system from top to bottom,’” Rogers observed. “We agree. But he conspicuously spent all his time talking only about the top.”

The Governor proposes authorizing the Commissioner to remove superintendents and boards in districts that persistently fail to improve after the infusion of resources and technical assistance, but was silent on how teachers would share in increased accountability.

Rogers added, “Superintendents have nothing to fear from increased accountability – we are already the most accountable school employees. What we ask for are the tools to deliver the results that we all seek.”

“The state has tied superintendents’ hands with staffing and curriculum rules,” Rogers said. “Until their hands are untied, it’s unfair to insist that they be fired because they can’t play the piano.”

“We say that in chronically unsuccessful schools or districts, the Commissioner should be authorized to approve leadership appointments, require boards to face special elections, and waive tenure protections to facilitate replacement of school staff, as warranted,” Rogers explained.

“The Governor is right, robust accountability will work,” Rogers concluded, “but only when everyone in the system shares the same goals and faces the same consequences for success or failure.”

– 30 –

The New York State Council of School Superintendents is the professional association of nearly 700 school district leaders, helping members succeed through professional development, advocating sound public policy on behalf of schoolchildren and taxpayers, and defending the leadership role of the superintendency.