

Q1. Please share any topics you would like State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia to address in her remarks to our Fall Leadership Summit on Monday, September 28.	Q2. Are there specific questions you would like to see Commissioner Elia respond to after her remarks at our conference in two weeks?
Field Testing; the new high school graduation requirements and special education; ways she intends to transparently work collaboratively with various stakeholder groups. (suburban)	Since the Foundation Aid funding formula has been frozen, how do you intend to address the need for equitable funding for all schools? Funding for after-school programs? (suburban)
The link between APPR and student test scores - this is the lynchpin to the controversies over the past several years. How do we move past this issue? (upstate suburb)	How can we get the conversation in our schools back to what constitutes good teaching and good programs for our students? We have spent much of the past several years struggling with compliance and political fights over APPR, Common Core, and the NYS tests. What does the road map look like to get us back to talking about what really matters, which is the interaction between our students and their teachers and staff? (upstate suburb)
Testing, APPR, Aid, (Awesome!!!!!!!!!! and Rural . . .)	I would like to know what she is going to do . . . or has done . . . to develop a relationship between the BOR, herself and the Governors office so we can work as a team and stop allowing legislative actions to drive our work. (Awesome!!!!!!!!!! and Rural . . .)
Progress on the reductions of unfunded mandates that are the result of the SED regulations not constricted by legislation. (Small, rural school district in the Albany area)	There appears to be a disconnect between accountability measures for schools and evaluation scores for teachers. While SED reports achievement scores for student and school performance, teachers' ratings are based on growth measures. The result is general confusion on how schools can perform "poorly" while teacher performance is "good". What steps might SED take to alleviate the disconnect between achievement and growth determinations? (Small, rural school district in the Albany area)
How will department cease the flood of new back door mandates? New, outside evaluator, cdos, aca compliance (Rural K-12)	As above and can the department help us explain to the legislator the importance of establishing school district special education reserves to help curb unpredictable spikes in unanticipated high cost special education costs? (Rural K-12)
Test refusal guidance (Upstate suburb)	Will the state grant waivers for APPR plans which are negotiated and approved in 2015-16 but which cannot be properly implemented in 2015-16 as we will be governed by 3012 c for the first several months of the school year and need to follow our old plan until such time as the new plan is submitted and approved? IE Does the state have a plan for the partial implementation of plans in 2015-16 which will make it difficult or impossible to fully implement 3012d plans even if we are successful in negotiating them? (Upstate suburb)

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<p>I think that it would be extremely important for the Commissioner to comment on last year's "opt-out" movement and what plans she has to change public opinion on this topic. Considering the fact that "opt-out" letters have already been coming into the buildings in my district, I'm not sure what will be perceived as different for parents this year. I have heard of her idea of a "Superintendent's tool kit." Perhaps she could elaborate on what such a tool kit might contain. On another note, given last year's sizable increase in state aid, it seems unlikely that the trend toward additional educational spending on the part of the state will continue. What are the Commissioner's plans for encouraging additional sharing opportunities. Specifically, does the Commissioner support mergers/tuitioning of students to realize economies of scale? How would she suggest incentivizing such arrangements? (Upstate Rural)</p>	<p>What are the Commissioner's plans to engage the legislature and governor regarding the interplay of APPR regulations and assessment participation? The Commissioner has worked both in New York and Florida in the field of education. What is her opinion on the efficacy of county-wide school districts? (Upstate Rural)</p>
<p>1) Common Core State Standards - give it a rest already! We are five years into it, and you can't turn back the clock. Accept that it was a poor roll-out and move on, but there is no need to reconsider the value of the standards! The issue is settled; continuous conversation about the implementation is a distraction. 2) Instilling/returning the public's confidence in our schools is not achieved through pandering and placating (and not just regaining the confidence of the general public, but also the same is true for the school professionals who are desperate for calm, consistency and predictability). Be an educator not a politician. Take a position and stick by it!! (upstate suburban)</p>	<p>1) Commissioner Elia and Governor Cuomo have both stated their belief that parents have the right to opt their children out of 3-8 State Testing. This right cannot be found in either State Education Law or Commissioner's Regulations - on what are they basing this belief? 2) If you want to give people the right to opt out, make it a district-by-district decision, not an individual child decision. This issue is dividing communities and the debate is counter-productive. Why can't State Ed give districts the authority to participate or not? Allowing kids to choose amounts to the same thing. 3) School districts that contain county jails and support Incarcerated Youth Programs are unfairly penalized when graduation rates include incarcerated youth who are short-term transient and from other districts. How can graduation rates for such districts be reported differently - or how can it somehow be indicated that the graduation rate includes incarcerated youth numbers? (upstate suburban)</p>
<p>Update of BOR meetings this week, any change to the APPR regs, most importantly the 50% growth score toward composite score. (Rural Western New York)</p>	

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Redesign of ELA and Math assessments. (Rural - 2,600 students)	Would the State Ed department consider moving the 3-8 ELA and Math assessment to the end of May and reducing the test administration days from 6 to 2? There is nothing more urgent in my mind than this issue. It can still be done for this school year. I can help move any other initiative forward (APPR, Common Core, Data Driven Instruction) but something must be done with assessments. The opt out numbers will continue to rise if we don't see a change and will cause further division in our districts. (Rural - 2,600 students)
Please have the regents consider reducing the number of days of testing grades 3 - 8. It should be one day for about 90 minutes and the teachers score the exam immediately after. Similar to the regents exams. A moratorium of one year should be placed on the new APPR, so districts and state officials have the opportunity to identify issues with 3012d. (Small City School District)	(Small City School District)
APPR Opt Out (Small City)	How NYSED and the Commissioner are going to support superintendents in dealing with the Opt Out movement that is alive and well in New York State. (Small City)
1. Governor's Commission on Common Core 2. Enormous discrepancy between State-provided Growth Scores and SLO scores 3. Initiatives to address students in poverty (Rural)	1. What expectations do you have regarding the Governor's Common Core Committee? Have you discussed the nature of this Committee with the Governor or his staff? 2. There is no similarity between growth scores that are provided by the state and locally prepared SLO scores. How is this fair, valid or equitable regarding teacher scores? (Rural)
The statistical validity of NYS "Growth" scores as an indicator of teacher and/or principal effectiveness. ()	
Would NY consider moving to PARCC? ()	Would NY consider moving to PARCC? ()
I would appreciate her looking into the certification of elementary and special education teachers. The "old way" worked. The new way creates many problems with hiring quality people who are appropriately certified and creates a lack of flexibility with internal school transfers. (Small City)	
(Upstate rural)	How is it possible that every teacher in a school can receive a growth score in the effective range but the building principal receives a score in the ineffective range? (Upstate rural)

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<p>The Common Core and State testing dominate most educational conversations. Please move beyond the labels and talk to us about student learning. What is your vision for opportunities in learning? What do you want learning to look like for NYS students? (Suburban, CNY)</p>	<p>Test refusals (opt outs) have seen a dramatic increase in the past two years. While I appreciate the tool kit, the reality is that a large portion of parents choosing to refuse the testing will not be persuaded to change thier mind as a result of what they view as a thinly veiled PR campaign. They are well educated and firm in their commitment. Local schools are caught in the crosshairs of a testing debate, the validity of which is still unclear. What are the strategic plans at SED to address the testing issues that go beyond parental choice to opt in or out? (Suburban, CNY)</p>
<p>Opt outs and 3 - 8 assessments - how the state ed. dept. will be handling the potential increase in #'s this year. (Small City/Rural)</p>	<p>What is the discussion at this point regarding the potential sanctions, if any, in the future for districts that continue to experience high opt out numbers on grades 3 - 8 assessments? (Small City/Rural)</p>
<p>(Rural, Long Island. P-8 335 students. 3500 year-round residents (more than triples in the summer).)</p>	<p>It it possible to exempt principals, who are also superintendents, from the requirement for outside evaluations ...APPR (BOE already does this). The cost down here is about 800 per day. I understand this doesn't involve too many people and may not be worth wasting her time to ask, but this just bugs me! Thanks (Rural, Long Island. P-8 335 students. 3500 year-round residents (more than triples in the summer).)</p>
<p>(Suburb)</p>	<p>Is there a timeline to review and implement a credit by examination model rather than the current Carnegie-unit / seat-time requirements? With the move away from PARCC, is there still a timeline to move to web-based testing at the HS or grade 3-8 level? How can we move towards a strength-based vision of public education in NYS rather than a deficit-based dystopia? (Suburb)</p>
<p>Please advise on how we should address opting out of testing which is linked to the APPR ... IE: STAR.... If a parent says no is this going to be upheld by the state? If no, can a school administer against the parents wishes ? (upstate rural)</p>	<p>Is there consideration to put the Pearson assessments on hold until the new assessments are developed? (upstate rural)</p>
<p>Opt Out Movement ()</p>	<p>How do you intend to deal with the increasing movement of parents opting out their students from NYS Testing? ()</p>

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State assessments Collaborative partnership with superintendents and other stakeholders in decision making (Suburban, Long Island School with 3,000 enrollment)	The current assessments have come under fire not only because they have been linked to teacher performance but because they do not accurately reflect student learning. The format of the assessments as well as the developmentally appropriate topics have not been able to usher our learners and instructors through the process. How do you plan to bring back parent and teacher support for public education? What would you like these "benchmarks" to look like? How should they be used? (Suburban, Long Island School with 3,000 enrollment)
The future of public education in New York State which may include the topic of online learning (similar to Florida's model). (upstate suburb)	I would be interested to know how Commissioner Elia may improve the image of NYS public education given the recent challenges of common core and alignment of assessments to teachers' evaluation, along with the poor characterization of our schools by our Governor. (upstate suburb)
Role of the school board - to positively or negatively influence the work of a district. (Suburb)	The only component of a District without standards or accountability is a school Board....does she have any thoughts on advocating for an increase in training and accountability? (Suburb)
Could she please explain in greater detail her comments about making a "tool box" available for Superintendents to use to curtail the test refusal movement? (Mid Hudson Valley)	Is the Commissioner aware of a form letter that parents are downloading from the www.nysape.org website? How does she intend to respond to not only the test refusal, but the refusal to engage in any conversation about why it is important for their students to participate in the state assessments? (Mid Hudson Valley)
SED public campaign regarding opt-outs. What is her vision for the structure of APPR moving forward? What is the timeline for revamping the school funding formula and the outdated COBOL platform? We need to hold the course of increased standards and expectations for our students. (Northern Rural)	Teachers are professionals and should be treated as such. One of the best opportunities that a teacher has to assess their student's performance on state exams is during the grading process. Is there any plan to allow teachers to grade their students assessments in the future? (Northern Rural)

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<p>I am outraged by the SED weekly notes of September 14, 2015. In these notes: " work group is going to be formed to consider the scale score that is used on Regents Examinations. There continues to be confusion about the difference between a scale score and a percentage score. This is particularly true for Regents exams because a 100 point scale is used for the scores. Scales are used because not all questions are of equal difficulty. The state has never recommended the incorporation of a Regents score into a student's overall average. " CONFUSION EXISTS BECAUSE SED started using "scale scoring" in 1998 and has NEVER informed the public about the change from % scores to scale scores and explain why and how they are doing it. No researcher worth anything will say you can test for levels of performance and then rank those performances using the same instrument (that amounts to voodoo testing!)- which is EXACTLY what SED does in assigning a "scale score". In fact, one of the very reasons that it is useless to track performance by the "scale score" is that the effort/performance to get say 93 one year would not necessarily equal that the next year and, as far as anyone knows there is no existing rubric or standard to determine the relative "difficulty" of the questions on the examinations. Since there is seemingly no end in sight to this ridiculous practice and NOW SED is trying to make us the problem with using scale scoring, SED needs to put on their grown-up pants and do what is ETHICAL and come clean to the public and stop this ridiculous practice. Use the field to create the exams, administer the exams and let teachers grade the exams. SED's own research to accuracy of scoring regents exams in 2008 concluded "statistically insignificance to grade variation" when it tested results. (Upper Hudson Valley/Greater Capital District- Rural and Proud!)</p>	<p>1- Will you get rid of the "fellows" brought in by Chancellor Tisch from the Gates Foundation? 2-Will the unaccountable fellows still be in positions of decision making as they have been for the last few years? 3-Do the fellows answer to you or the Chancellor? Can you fire a fellow? 4-How can an evaluation system of teachers and principals be built upon a system that incorporates opting out and no student accountability is measured? 5-How can we have a system of SLO's that actually measure what is taught as an equal to a trivia standardized test that picks and chooses what standards are tested? 6-How can school districts close gaps when those who can pay for analysis of state testing are better prepared than others by "gaming" the testing system in anticipating which standards are likely tested? 7-Are we testing for levels of competency? If so how is it that we declare one group "competent" but another not so by the arbitrary changing of the standard that no one is allowed to know beforehand what it is or what it means? (Upper Hudson Valley/Greater Capital District- Rural and Proud!)</p>
<p>Common Core APPR</p>	<p>Over the last four years we have dedicated much professional development to implement the Common core standards. Although the NYS roll out of these standards was extremely flawed, many educators are seeing positive growth of our students. What do you propose we do now?</p>
<p>The loss of integrity in the assessment process. The manipulation of scoring scales in Common Core testing has led to the loss of confidence from stakeholders in SED. (rural)</p>	<p>The toolkit will not be valuable for superintendents or school boards while stakeholders have plenty of examples to site where SED has manipulated scoring scales on Common Core tests for political purposes. What are you doing to confront the loss of confidence in SED in providing assessments free of political distortions? (rural)</p>

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<p>NYS has one of most inequitable state aid funding formulas. Low SES districts keep getting a lower percentage of aid. What are your thoughts and plans to rectify this situation?</p>	
<p>I would like to see the Commissioner address The Council's stand on the validity of the APPR and our recommendation that the process be completely overhauled, not tweaked, but scrapped and completely redone. I would like her to address those of us who have 65% and 70% assessment refusal rates in communities where her "tool kit" is seen as a joke, as are her comments about just explaining to parents the validity and need to take the test. (Upstate Suburb/rural)</p>	<p>How is the effectiveness of the APPR going to be evaluated and when? (Upstate Suburb/rural)</p>
<p>Teacher Evaluation. I'd love to hear evidence of how this system is working, as opposed to previous evaluation systems. The reality is poor teachers are still getting rankings of effective/highly effective and good teachers are getting rankings of developing/ineffective. Fact of the matter is this system doesn't work as intended and is causing angst amongst all ranks, as well as causing time which should be devoted to curriculum and instruction, being devoted to negotiating and trying to carry out a flawed evaluation system. I'd also like someone to address the increase in parents who are refusing their children to take 3-8 exams. What is going to be done about this and at what point are we going to acknowledge this isn't going away. Again I think it is naïve of us to think this is just a group of oppositional parents with no merit to their concern over testing etc. These parents have valid concerns, as do the public school systems and they need to be acknowledged and addressed. (rural/southern tier/high needs)</p>	<p>Teacher Evaluation (rural/southern tier/high needs)</p>

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<p>We have spent a lot of time revisiting the purpose of our school this year as it seems to get lost in the chaos created by the rapid fire mandates and changes to mandates coming from both the state government and SED. In doing this we answer two key questions: What is it we do? and, "Why do we do it?" Our answers were: "At we guarantee high levels of learning for ALL." And we do this to: Guarantee that EVERYONE will FLOURISH today, tomorrow, and beyond." These apply to the students and adults in our district. What are the answers to these two questions for SED now that there has been a significant change in leadership at many levels? (Rural, Very High Needs)</p>	<p>We have spent a lot of time revisiting the purpose of our school this year as it seems to get lost in the chaos created by the rapid fire mandates and changes to mandates coming from both the state government and SED. In doing this we answer two key questions: What is it we do? and, "Why do we do it?" Our answers were: "At we guarantee high levels of learning for ALL." And we do this to: Guarantee that EVERYONE will FLOURISH today, tomorrow, and beyond." These apply to the students and adults in our district. What are the answers to these two questions for SED now that there has been a significant change in leadership at many levels? (Rural, Very High Needs)</p>
<p>What is her vision for education in NYS? How does she intend to support our very real concerns (fiscal, state assessments, APPR, opt outs)? (Finger Lakes Rural)</p>	<p>How will she work with Governor Cuomo in terms of setting a positive vision for education in NYS? Will she support "out of the box" ideas like later school start times and a different calendar (3 months on , 1 month off). (Finger Lakes Rural)</p>

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<p>For the past five years, w\We have focused our energy and resources on Regents Reforms (CCLS, APPR, Professional Development, use of State and 3rd party assessments, Preparing for Online Assessments, and responding to Public Protests against all of the aforementioned), During this time, important, ongoing concerns have been pushed to the way side that are destined to become critical concerns in the very near future. For example, the State's computer system is antiquated and obsolete by all reasonable measures. We in the field are continually asked to complete State and Federal reports for different agencies that are duplicative and would be unnecessary if the state's computer infrastructure was updated and data could be shared and accessed between agencies. It is my understanding the state computer system within the business portal runs on a DOS-based platform from the early 1980's. Seriously, the couple computer programmers patching programming problems must be retirement eligible! What is being done to address this need before it is an unavoidable crisis? Will the SMART Schools Bond Act provide funds to update the state's own technology infrastructure or would this need to be special legislative funding or an appropriation from the governor and office of budget? Also, isn't the state still using a printing press (1970's and earlier technology) to disseminate Regents and other print material? Years of neglect has resulted in deteriorated bones and joints in the state's technology infrastructure that has now reached the level of osteoarthritis. The good news is that with proper care, attention, and treatment protocols outcomes for most with osteoarthritis are good. (Upstate, high needs, small rural school district)</p>	

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<p>The linkage between student test scores and teacher/principal evaluators. Independent observers. (Rural, High Needs, Upstate)</p>	<p>There is little empirical evidence that VAM is statistically valid for evaluation of teachers or principals. Therefore, will the department of education advocate for less emphasis on VAM for teacher/principal evaluations in the future? Large districts with multiple schools and administrators will have no difficulty using administrators from other, like buildings (such as similar grade level compositions) as independent evaluators. Small districts with few administrators and perhaps only one principal per building configuration will have a much more difficult time and would likely have to incur additional expenses at a time when resources are already stretched to accomplish independent evaluations. Would the department of education consider waiving the independent observation requirement for schools under a certain size to reduce the resource burden? (Rural, High Needs, Upstate)</p>
<p>Tax cap and NYS and federal funding.. Comptroller "goldilocks" audit remarks. Opt out mixed messages. (suburban)</p>	<p>What is the department's official position on parental right to opt out of NYSED assessments? (suburban)</p>
<p>Specifically address how the Commissioner plans to tackle the political issues created by the flawed common core roll out and the "high stakes testing" opt-out movement. To suggest administrators need a "tool kit" implies school districts were somehow to blame for these controversies. After 29 yrs in the field I am capable of discussing education issues with parents. This strategy illustrates a disconnect in understanding conditions in the field. The anti-CCLS/opt-out supporters are highly organized, sophisticated and intensely passionate in their view that the standards are flawed and that testing should drive instruction and not be used as a means to "go after" their child's teacher. To think "re-branding" is the best method of addressing these issues is naive as best. ()</p>	<p>In New York we have seen the negative impact of allowing politicians (specifically Gov Cuomo) to dictate and drive educational policy. How will you work to restore the regulatory authority of the Board of Regents and the State Education Department? ()</p>

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<p>Receivership Please consider "transient students" in accountability statistics. In particular, UFSD has an annual 10% transient rate, with half coming from out-of-country. 4 of 10 students who start in 3rd grade or before in CI remain through 12 grade. 90% of students who arrive in 6th grade or before graduate. It is inaccurate to place the measurement of students' success (who were not in the district for most of their education); upon the district that did not have them for the majority of their education. It is grievously unfair to measure success of one district in these circumstances, against the majority of districts that experience very low transient rates. Copious research supports the fact that transient rates are a predictor of student failure. It should be incorporated into the model. (Long Island high needs)</p>	<p>Why are there more expensive requirements placed upon schools serving low-wealth districts than those of high-wealth? In particular, school districts with receivership buildings must now provide access to employment, career and technology TRAINING for family members. If low-wealth districts must provide social and welfare services; all districts should be required as there are pockets of need in every community. With the federal influx of Undocumented Immigrant Minors (UIM) who were placed ONLY in low-wealth communities, with no state/federal funding these school systems were heavily overburdened; contributing to "Failure" status. With the anticipated influx of Syrian children, is the State considering placing those children in high-wealth communities with the necessary LOCAL fiscal resources; creating a much better probability of student success? (Long Island high needs)</p>
<p>More concrete support of opt out and how the State will respond this year. Two year age restriction on ELL....why,? Her vision for the State this year....action plan? (Suburban)</p>	<p>(Suburban)</p>
<p>Dates of 3-8 tests Raising passing score on Regents for Class of 2022. State Ed getting away from being all about compliance--too many reports! (Rural, 1350 students, capital region)</p>	<p>If the 3-8 tests remain "1 sitting" would she consider moving the testing days to Regents Week or mid-June? Will she advocate for what was originally suggested several years ago and have 3 sittings for exams-late fall, early spring and end of year(June)? What is the justification for moving the passing rates for Algebra and ELA to a higher number for the class of 2022? How will the state explain a student who receives a 70% on algebra regents and "fails" but then earns a 70% on the geometry and Algebra II Trig Regents and "passes?" Are community colleges adjusting their arbitrary benchmarks for requiring remediation to students whose math Regents scores were compressed downward this year and possibly in future years? Or will we just be seeing a larger increase in students supposedly needing remediation in college due to norming of tests. (Rural, 1350 students, capital region)</p>
<p>Failing APPR System Poor Implementation of CCS Special Education Graduation Pathways (CDOS, RCTs, etc) State Testing Program (Suburban)</p>	<p>How are districts on Long Island supposed to handle the massive number of students refusing the 3-8 tests? Does the State have a plan of action to support districts who experience this? (Suburban)</p>