

S.AVE O.UR S.CHOOLS

Emergency Educational Action Plan to Address the 2010 Test Score Crisis

The release of the 2010 New York State reading and math test scores was a sobering moment for our city. The depth and breadth of the crisis is staggering. As a result of NYS recalibrating the test scores to align with college-ready standards, citywide reading scores declined by 27 points, math scores went down 28 points, and the racial and income-based achievement gaps have grown. Only 13% of students with disabilities and 14% of English Language Learners scored proficient in English Language Arts (ELA). Tens of thousands of additional students are NOT on the road to college and career success. Compared to 2009:

- » **109,000 more students are NOT meeting standards in ELA**
- » **50,000 more students are significantly BELOW standards in ELA (scoring in Level 1)**
- » **364 more school have 2/3 or more of their students NOT meeting standards in ELA**

The NYC Department of Education has a responsibility to acknowledge this immense challenge and implement emergency policy changes to support struggling students and schools.

We call upon the NYC Department of Education to:

- » **Provide intensive interventions for all students who scored in Levels 1 and 2, including those now in high school.**

Tens of thousands of struggling students should have received academic support services to enhance their learning but did not, because they were incorrectly identified as proficient. The NYC Department of Education must ensure that all students who scored in Level 1 or 2 this year receive Academic Intervention Services (AIS) from their school, including all current 9th-graders who scored below standard. The DOE should appoint a full-time director of AIS and ensure that all Children First Networks include a full-time Academic Intervention Specialist.

- » **Suspend for one year all high-stakes policy decisions that are based on standardized test scores and establish a revised accountability system based on reliable multiple measures.**

The data confirm that the administration's reliance on test-based rewards and consequences as the driver for school improvement is flawed and that instruction focused on preparing students to do well on standardized tests DOES not generate the kinds of learning that will prepare them for success in college. The DOE should significantly reduce its reliance on standardized test scores as the basis for evaluating schools, increase the use of qualitative measures, and establish an Advisory Committee on Accountability that includes respected experts on testing, as well as

advocates and parents, to help design a more effective accountability system and monitor its implementation.

» **Provide comprehensive support and guidance to the city's most struggling schools.**

DOE intervention cannot be limited to providing services to individual students. At more than 300 NYC schools, at least two-thirds of students are not meeting standards in ELA and at least 20% of students are way below standards (scoring in Level 1). These results indicate that the current DOE structure does not provide sufficient supports for improving teaching and learning in the most struggling schools and that these schools need an educational redesign plan to improve instruction and achievement. The DOE must take responsibility for ensuring that appropriate support and guidance are provided to those schools and the network staff who support them in areas that include expanded learning time, teacher effectiveness, and curriculum rigor and diversity.

We call on the DOE to work with parents and school communities to implement these proposals by prioritizing and targeting financial and program resources to serve the students and schools of greatest need. The current test score crisis serves as a reminder of the constitutional standard established in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision: New York public school students have the right to a meaningful education through high school that will prepare them for competitive employment and active civic participation. The DOE must take forward steps with the students and schools it serves to make this right a reality.