

**THE**  
**STATE**  
**OF NEW YORK**  
**PUBLIC**  
**EDUCATION** **2012**

A NYCAN RESEARCH REPORT



# THE STATE OF NEW YORK PUBLIC EDUCATION

THE EMPIRE STATE STRIKES BACK:  
A 2012 REPORT CARD FOR OUR STATE'S  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC POLICIES

PREFACE BY **CHRISTINA GRANT**, NYCAN FOUNDING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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# Preface

**CHRISTINA GRANT**

NYCAN FOUNDING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I grew up in Hempstead, Long Island, one of the lowest-performing suburban communities in New York State. I was deemed a smart kid. I loved school. Neither of my parents attended college, but they worked and sacrificed to give me the best educational options they could provide so that I could. I attended public elementary school, private middle school and public high school. There was no school choice in my community. We have one public middle school, one public high school and the elementary school I attended is now an abandoned building. I remember my father crying when he told me he couldn't afford to send me to private high school. He simply said, "I can either send you to private high school or college and you've got to go to college."

See, most parents care deeply about their children's educational options, but when you lack resources you are often stuck in a system that doesn't work for your kids. I was afraid to go to high school: gang violence, bullying and apathetic teachers defined my high school experience. My mother had to fight for me to be placed in Regents/Honors classes.

I graduated from Hempstead High School in 1996 as salutatorian and headed to Hofstra University, down the road in my community. During my freshman year writing seminar I was told that despite graduating as class salutatorian I could not write at the collegiate level. I can list the professors at Hofstra that refused to let me drop out of college. They worked with me after hours and on weekends to fill the gaps in my ability to form a written argument and to process critical thinking. I know that I'm one of the lucky ones.

Fast forward to 2003, when I joined Teach For America. I learned that I wasn't alone. Hundreds of thousands of children throughout this state are simply denied access to the quality education promised by our country's forefathers. In Hempstead we recently celebrated the opening of The Academy, one of the first charter schools in our town. This school opened in 2009 and in their first year they outperformed every elementary school in the district. Change is possible. Change can come to my hometown. Change can come to New York State.

My story ends well, but as a teacher I learned firsthand that there are too many other students whose stories don't. Less than 75 percent of high school students graduate, even though we spend over \$18,000 per student per year on education, more than any other state in the country.

That’s why I’m so proud to be the founding executive director of NYCAN: The New York Campaign for Achievement Now. NYCAN launched in January 2012 as an education reform advocacy group working to change state policy in New York to make sure that all New York kids have access to a great public school.

Our inaugural campaign, *The Empire State Strikes Back*, will advocate for three powerful, urgent and commonsense reforms to strike back against our cavernous achievement gaps. First, we must “Equip parents with a trigger” to “take over” their children’s struggling schools and put transformative power into the hands of the people most affected by and invested in our public schools. Second, we must “Recruit teaching talent into the Empire State” by increasing interstate reciprocity rules for teacher certification so we can get great teachers who have been certified by high-quality alternative programs in other states into New York classrooms. Third, we must help kids “start college early, finish college strong” by supporting the proven, inventive early college high school programs in our states. Outside of our three campaign goals, we will also work this year with coalition partners to support vital reform efforts in areas such as teacher evaluation and charter school facilities funding.

I challenge you to join this movement. Collectively, we can move the needle for children in the state of New York.

## Executive Summary

At NYCAN, we always start with the facts. What is working for New York kids and what is failing them? Where have we come from and how much further do we have to go? Which policies are research-based, proven paths to improvement? This inaugural report, “The State of New York Public Education” gives us those facts so we can chart a path towards our goal of great schools for every New York child.

Some highlights include:

- *New York’s top students are the tops.* New York ranks second in the country in the percent of students who successfully complete an Advanced Placement class.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [http://apreport.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/downloads/pdfs/AP\\_RTIN\\_2011.pdf](http://apreport.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/downloads/pdfs/AP_RTIN_2011.pdf)

- *Top students are segregated by race and class.* Even with the second-highest achieving AP program in the country, only 4.1 percent of black students successfully completed at least one AP class, compared to 24.6 percent for New York high school graduates on the whole.
- *New York is home to cavernous achievement gaps.* In 2011, white students in New York were almost twice as likely as their black and Hispanic counterparts to meet basic standards in reading and writing.
- *Our state doesn't stack up to our neighbors across the border or across the globe.* In eighth-grade math, we rank 35th, well below our neighbors, Massachusetts and New Jersey, which rank first and third, respectively.<sup>2</sup> Globally, we rank alongside countries such as Lithuania and Hungary, not global leaders Finland and Singapore.
- *We're falling behind in spite of massive spending.* New York spends more money per pupil than any other state in the country, including our neighbors, Massachusetts and New Jersey.<sup>3</sup>
- *Our kids are not prepared for tomorrow's jobs.* By 2018, 73<sup>4</sup> percent of up-and-coming New York jobs will require some form of post-secondary education, but only 45<sup>5</sup> percent of New Yorkers in the workforce have some form of higher education.
- *More reforms are needed to strike back against the persistent achievement gaps.* NYCAN's *Empire State Strikes Back* 2012 legislative campaign proposes three critical goals to close achievement gaps: equipping parents with a trigger to "take over" struggling schools, increased interstate reciprocity for teachers and support for early college high school programs.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/PEPG1019\\_Hanushek\\_PetersonWoessmann.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/PEPG1019_Hanushek_PetersonWoessmann.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www2.census.gov/govs/school/09f33pub.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/assets/reports-/skills2compete\\_forbiddenjobs\\_ny\\_2011.pdf](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/assets/reports-/skills2compete_forbiddenjobs_ny_2011.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://achieve.org/files/NewYork-CCRFactSheet-July2011.pdf>

## The Big Picture: New York Student Achievement

# 1

The latest results on New York students' standardized tests tell us a story: Our top students are the tops, but our overall progress is stagnant at best and our students are far outshined when they go head-to-

head with our neighbors in Massachusetts, our competitors across the globe and even when they arrive at colleges here in New York State. What's more, the economics of New York State are clearly calling out for a more highly educated workforce that we are just not delivering.

### ***Top Students***

New York does very well with our top students, boasting the second best AP program in the nation and high levels of participation on the ACT college entrance exam. New York ranks second in the country in the percentage of students who “successfully” complete an AP class, meaning that they received a score of three or higher.<sup>6</sup> Some 24.6 percent of New York high schoolers successfully completed an AP class in 2011, compared to the national average of 16.9 percent.<sup>7</sup>

The same trend continues with the ACT. Thirty-nine percent of all New York test-takers achieved college readiness benchmarks in the four major subjects: English, reading, mathematics and science.<sup>8</sup> This number is 14 percentage points higher than the national average of 25 percent.<sup>9</sup> On the SAT, while students' scores decreased from 2010 to 2011, public school participation increased to 89 percent in 2011, up 10 percent from 2010 to one of the highest participation rates in the nation.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Students on the Whole***

On the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress, also known as the Nation's Report Card, a national test given every two years to students in every state, New York posted incremental gains in eighth-grade reading, improving proficiency by two percentage points from 2009 to 2011. Taking a longer view, this progress is adding up. The percentage of New York eighth-graders who scored at least proficient on the Nation's Report Card improved from 15 percent in math in 1990 to 30 percent in 2011. Similarly, the proportion of fourth-graders scoring proficient or above in math increased from 17 percent in 1992 to 36 percent in 2011.

New York students are also improving slightly on the New York State Assessment Program,<sup>11</sup> an annual exam given to all students in grades three through eight in reading and math and in grades four and eight for science. In 2011, students in New York took the tougher, revised edition of the State Assessment Program, resulting in little or no change or even decreases from the 2010 scores. Students in grades three through eight did improve their math proficiency since 2010, but only by two percentage points. Reading proficiency dropped by one

<sup>6</sup> “Successful”, as defined by College Board, is a student who completes any AP course and receives a 3 on a subsequent AP exam

<sup>7</sup> [http://apreport.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/downloads/pdfs/AP\\_RTN\\_2011.pdf](http://apreport.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/downloads/pdfs/AP_RTN_2011.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> College Readiness benchmarks are empirically derived scores that, if achieved, indicate a student has a 50 percent chance of achieving a B grade in a intro level college course on that subject.

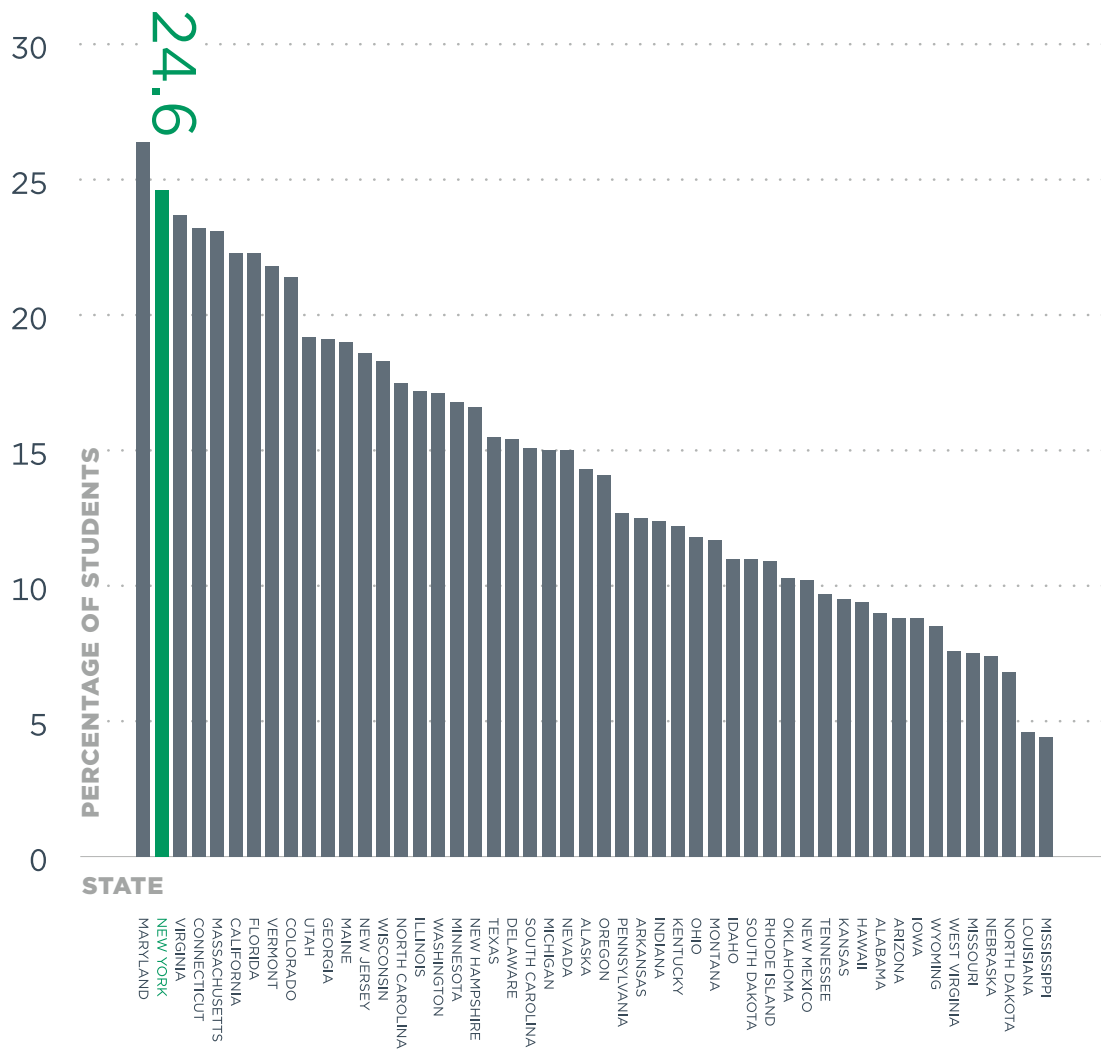
<sup>9</sup> <http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2011/states/pdf/NewYork.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/SAT\\_Trends\\_Report\\_9\\_12\\_2011.pdf](http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/SAT_Trends_Report_9_12_2011.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20110808/home.html>

**FIGURE 1** Percent of Class of 2010 Graduates Who Had at Least One Successful AP Experience

**SOURCE** [http://apreport.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/downloads/pdfs/AP\\_RTN\\_2011.pdf](http://apreport.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/downloads/pdfs/AP_RTN_2011.pdf)





percentage point. Our eighth-graders achieved the largest increase in math, improving by five percentage points since 2010.

### ***New York vs. the Region***

We continue to lag behind our neighboring states. In eighth-grade math, we ranked 35th on the Nation’s Report Card in 2011, well below our neighbors, Massachusetts and New Jersey, which rank first and third, respectively. Similarly, New York eighth-graders ranked 26th in reading again, falling far behind students in neighboring states.

### ***New York vs. the World***

Even if we omit the large achievement gaps within New York public schools, our state is far from competitive on a global scale. The report “U.S. Math Performance in a Global Perspective,”<sup>12</sup> completed by Harvard’s Program on Education Policy and the Taubman Center for State and Local Government, looks at scores on the 2005 Nation’s Report Card. The report then compares each state’s scores with the scores of other countries on the Program for International Student Assessment.<sup>13</sup> The basic finding is that no state in the country is competitive with any of the world’s leading industrial nations. Massachusetts, the highest-ranked state in America, is significantly outperformed by 14 other countries. New York ranks 16th in the U.S., comparable to other states such as Colorado and Texas, but our students score lower than students in 29 other countries around the world.

When comparing only New York’s top-achieving white students to all students of other countries, New York is still outperformed by 23 countries that are among the top industrialized nations, ranking similarly to Hungary, Ireland, and Lithuania.

This disturbing trend also plays out when we look only at New York students with at least one parent who has a four-year degree. Even with one of the most educated workforces in the country, New York is still significantly outperformed by 18 other countries in the world when comparing New York students who have one parent with a four-year degree with all students (with or without degree-holding parents) of the world. New York public schools are not adequately preparing even our most accomplished students to compete with other nations in the world.

**12** [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/PEPG10-19\\_HanushekPetersonWoessmann.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/PEPG10-19_HanushekPetersonWoessmann.pdf)

**13** PISA is an international test that compares math, reading, and science scores with member countries of the OECD. Comparisons are made between 50 countries including the top industrialized nations

**TABLE 1** 2011 Nation’s Report Card, Overall State Rankings, Eighth-Grade Math

RANK	STATE	RANK	STATE	RANK	STATE
1	Massachusetts	18	Wyoming	35	New York
2	Minnesota	19	Connecticut	36	Michigan
3	New Jersey	20	Idaho	37	Oklahoma
4	Vermont	21	North Carolina	38	Arkansas
5	Montana	22	Pennsylvania	39	Arizona
6	New Hampshire	23	Indiana	40	Georgia
7	North Dakota	24	Iowa	41	Nevada
8	Colorado	25	Alaska	42	Florida
9	South Dakota	25	Utah	42	Hawaii
10	Texas	27	Illinois	44	New Mexico
11	Kansas	27	Nebraska	45	Tennessee
12	Virginia	29	Rhode Island	46	West Virginia
13	Maine	30	Delaware	47	California
13	Wisconsin	31	Oregon	47	Louisiana
15	Ohio	32	Missouri	49	Mississippi
16	Washington	33	Kentucky	50	Alabama
17	Maryland	34	South Carolina		

## *Economics of Education*

New York spends more money per pupil than any other state in the country, including our neighbors, Massachusetts and New Jersey.<sup>14</sup> But this spending is not protecting us from very real economic problems stemming from our educational inequities. As Governor Andrew Cuomo pointed out in his 2012 State of the State address, “Today, we are driven by the business of public education more than the achievement in public education. Maybe that’s why we spend more money than any other state but are 38th in graduation rates.” New York’s deep and systemic achievement gap between the haves and have-nots has enormous economic implications. The aggregate income of all New Yorkers would increase by \$24 billion if black, Hispanic and Native American students were to achieve at the same level of white students by 2020.<sup>15</sup>

New York’s unemployment rate is well below the national average at 7.9 percent<sup>16</sup> vs 9.0 percent.<sup>17,18</sup> New York also benefits from a highly educated work force, with 45 percent of residents obtaining some form of higher education.<sup>19</sup>

The economic landscape in New York is changing. Once considered a preeminent manufacturing state, New York’s economy has moved toward a more service-oriented system, demanding a very different educational structure. Middle- and high-skill jobs are growing, and jobs that require only a high school diploma are shrinking. Post-secondary education and technical training are more important than ever.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, by 2018, the National Skills Coalition predicts that only 27 percent of New York State jobs will require a high school diploma or less while 39 percent of jobs will require much more than a high school diploma.<sup>21</sup> The remaining 34 percent of jobs will be high-skill, requiring a college degree.

**14** <http://www2.census.gov/govs/school/09f33pub.pdf>

**15** <http://www.all4ed.org/files/demography.pdf>

**16** <http://www.bls.gov/web/laus/laumstrk.htm>

**17** <http://www.bls.gov/bls/unemployment.htm>

**18** These unemployment numbers are from October 2011

**19** <http://achieve.org/files/NewYork-CCRFactSheet-July2011.pdf>

**20** <http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/FullReport.pdf>

**21** [http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/assets/reports-/skills2compete\\_forgottenjobs\\_ny\\_2011.pdf](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/assets/reports-/skills2compete_forgottenjobs_ny_2011.pdf)

# New York’s Achievement Gap

# 2

Despite the success of our top students and the gains, albeit slow, for our students on the whole, New York is home to a cavernous achievement gap. In 2011, white students in New York were almost twice as likely as their black and Hispanic counterparts to meet basic standards in

**FIGURE 2** If Only 45% of New York’s Population Continues to Pursue Post-High School Degrees, Nearly 40% of Middle- and High-Skill Job Positions will be Left Vacant by 2018

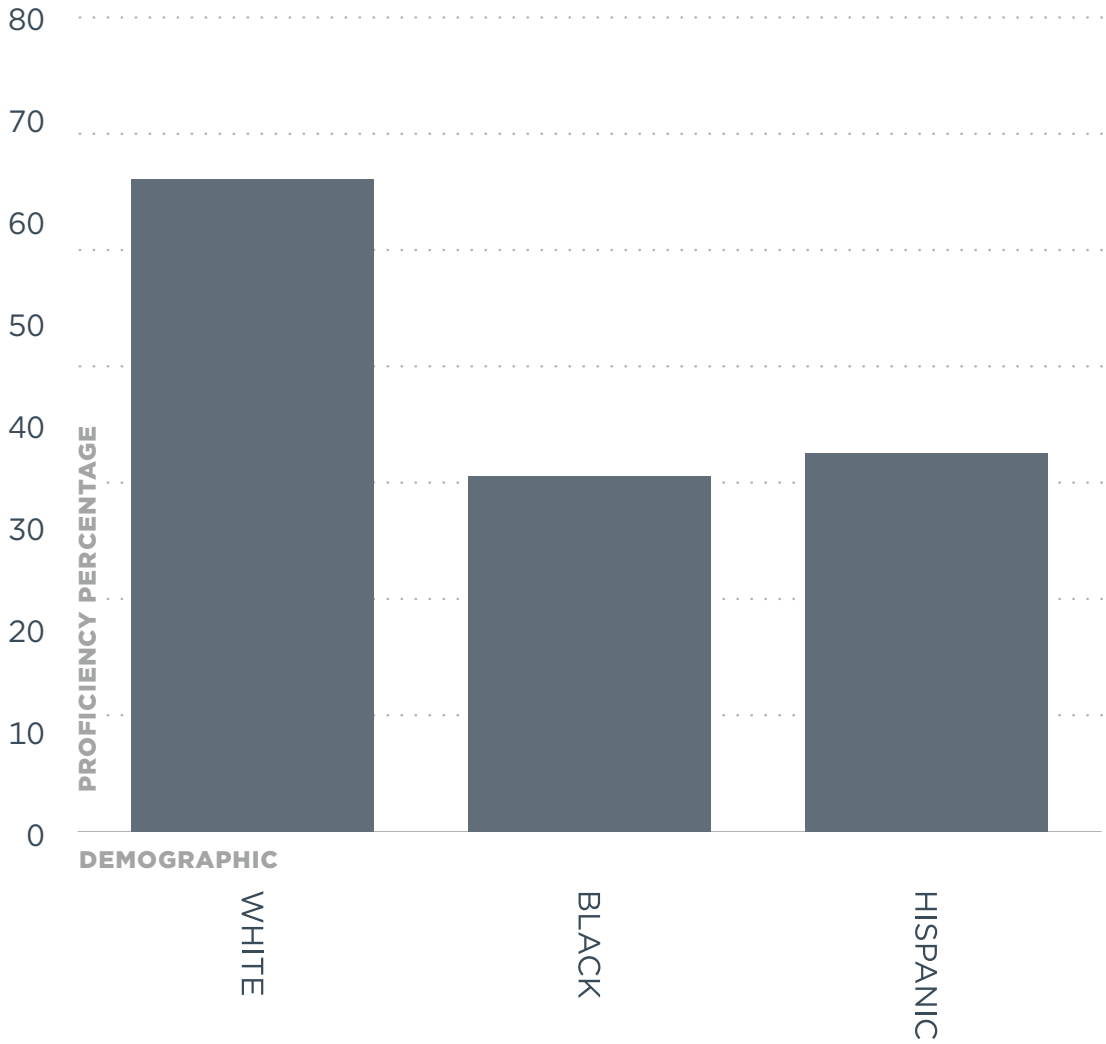
**SOURCE** <http://achieve.org/files/NewYork-CCRFactSheet-July2011.pdf>, [http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/assets/reports-/skills2compete\\_forgottenjobs\\_ny\\_2011.pdf](http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/assets/reports-/skills2compete_forgottenjobs_ny_2011.pdf)



Middle- and High-Skill Workers  
  
 Middle- and High-Skill Job Opportunities

**FIGURE 3** New York State Assessment Program Proficiency by Race, English Language Arts, Grades 3-8

**SOURCE** <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20110808/home.html>



reading and writing. Only 35 percent of black students and 37.2 percent of Hispanic students in grades three through eight scored at least proficient on the English Language Arts portion of the state assessment. In comparison, 52.8 percent of all students and 64.2 percent of white students did.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20110808/home.html>

Results on the math exam revealed a similar story: Less than half of New York's black students—44 percent—and half of all Hispanic students—50.2 percent—scored at least proficient in math in 2011. But almost three-quarters of white students—73.3 percent—scored at least proficient.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20110808/home.html>

Black students are severely underrepresented in the top percentiles on national exams such as the ACT and AP. Only 24 percent of black students who took the ACT attained college readiness benchmarks on three or more subjects, while 64 percent of white test takers did.

What's more, even with the second-highest achieving AP program in the country, only 4.1 percent of our black graduates in 2010 participated in at least one AP exam and had a successful experience, compared to 24.6 percent for New York high schoolers on the whole.

Stacked up against other states, New York has some of the largest achievement gaps in the country. In eighth-grade reading, New York has the country's fifth-largest gap between academic performance of Hispanic students and their white classmates and the third-largest gap between English Language Learners and students whose primary language is English. English Language Learners in New York are an astonishing five grade levels behind their peers in eighth-grade reading. When students who don't speak English as their primary language enter high school, they are far behind their fluent peers and are significantly less likely to attend and graduate from college.

### ***The Black-White Gap***

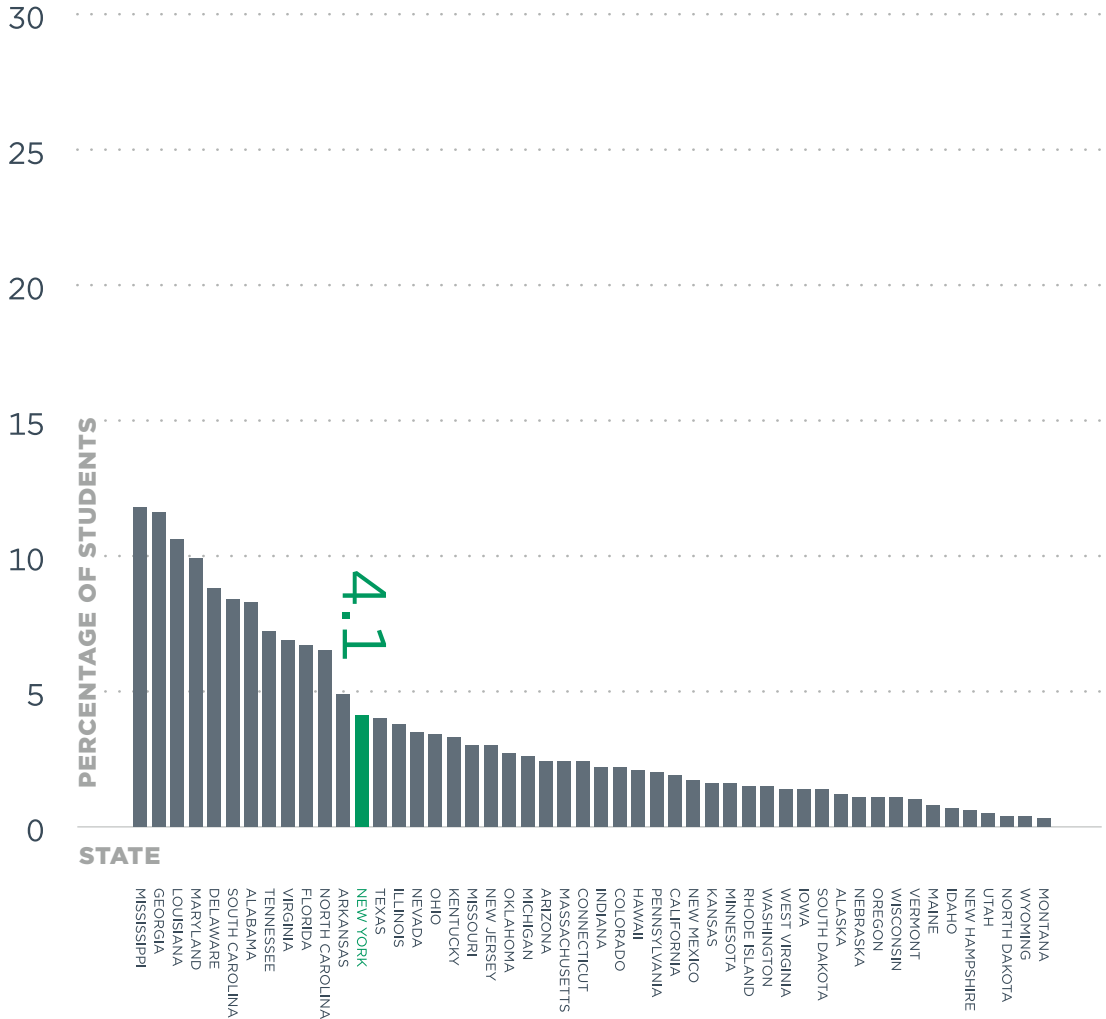
On the Nation's Report Card, only 18 percent of our black eighth-graders are proficient in reading, meaning that 82 percent are reading below grade level. It follows that by the time these children enter high school, more than 80 percent of black students are unprepared to read grade-level material. By way of contrast, 46 percent of white eighth-graders in New York scored at least proficient in reading.<sup>24</sup> In other terms, black eighth-graders in New York are, on average, over two grade levels behind their white peers in reading.<sup>25</sup> In fourth-grade math, only 17 percent of black students scored at least proficient, while 46 percent of white students received the same score.

<sup>24</sup> Ten points on the NAEP are the rough equivalent of one grade level's proficiency in reading and math. A 30-point gap is therefore approximately a three-grade level difference.

<sup>25</sup> Scale Score difference: 290.6-262

**FIGURE 4** Percent of Black Graduates in Class of 2010 Who Had at Least One Successful AP Experience

**SOURCE** [http://apreport.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/downloads/pdfs/AP\\_RTN\\_2011.pdf](http://apreport.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/downloads/pdfs/AP_RTN_2011.pdf)



### ***The Hispanic-White Gap***

The data also illustrate significant gaps between New York’s Hispanic students and their white classmates. On the Nation’s Report Card, Hispanic fourth-graders in New York performed worse than Hispanic students in 19 other states and are behind students in neighboring states. Only 20 percent of Hispanic fourth-graders read at grade level. By eighth grade, reading proficiency does not improve, staying at 20 percent. Accordingly, 80 percent of Hispanic students enter high school unprepared to read grade-level material. Achievement gaps between Hispanic and white students in mathematics are also disturbingly wide. The gap between our Hispanic and white students ranks 34th out of 46 states in eighth-grade math. Similarly, in eighth-grade reading, New York ranks 40th out of 45 states for the achievement gap between white and Hispanic students. With a burgeoning Hispanic population, these gaps are unsustainable.

### ***The Income Gap***

There are significant disparities in achievement levels between low-income students and their wealthier peers. Low-income students in eighth-grade are approximately two grade levels behind their more advantaged classmates in reading<sup>26</sup> and math.<sup>27</sup> Only 24 percent of low-income eighth-graders are proficient in reading, and 18 percent are proficient in math, according to the Nation’s Report Card scores.

<sup>26</sup> Scale Score difference: 277-254  
<sup>27</sup> Scale Score difference: 292.5-26

# **The State of New York Education Policy**

# 3

Great public policies lead to great public schools. We know we have work to do to increase student achievement for every New York child, and that work begins in the halls of power. Despite the adoption of a new law requiring revamped teacher and principal evaluations, management and labor have been unable to agree on implementation of the new system. At the same time, a reevaluation of student performance in recent years demonstrates that although New York students are making moderate gains, they are not adequate to prepare them for



college and career. New York has made real policy strides, but our momentum is at risk of stagnating.

### ***Race to the Top Progress***

In August 2010, New York was one of 12 states to receive a U.S. Department of Education *Race to the Top* grant. New York was awarded nearly \$700 million in federal funds to implement and expand our education reform efforts. \$348.3 million of the funds are committed to participating school districts and charter schools and \$348.3 million are committed to building the capacity of educators statewide and directly support new curriculum models, standards, assessments, teacher and principal preparation and professional development as well as the statewide student data system.

New York's *Race to the Top* application highlighted a four-pronged strategy for implementing new reforms, focusing on more rigorous academic standards and assessments grounded in the Common Core State Standards, completion of the comprehensive statewide data system, molding great teachers and great leaders through development and a robust evaluation system, and turning around low-achieving schools..

Prior to submitting the *Race to the Top* application, New York enacted several pieces of legislation to overhaul numerous aspects of the education system, signaling our seriousness for change and increasing our competitiveness in the competition. This reform package included: raising the charter school cap from 200 to 460 schools, improving charter school accountability, providing funding to complete implementation of the comprehensive statewide data system, allowing school districts to enter into contracts with Educational Partnership Organizations to help manage schools that are persistently under-performing, and amending the teacher and principal evaluation system to require that student performance measures be included in the evaluations and that evaluation results be included in all major employment decisions. This bill was a bold first step toward powerful reform and, once fully implemented, a percentage of teacher and principal evaluations will be tied to student academic performance measures, increasing the accountability of teachers and principals.

To ensure more rigorous standards and assessments, the New York Board of Regents also adopted Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects and is a leading member in helping to shape the common assessments.

Even with these reforms, barriers to full implementation of the

*Race to the Top* application exist. Most notably, portions of the regulations regarding the new teacher evaluation system were overturned by an Albany County Supreme Court justice who declared that the new system relied too heavily on state assessment data. Our teacher evaluation system has yet to be fully implemented and the court case has slowed down its progress. Another barrier to implementation is that the *Race to the Top* legislation mandated evaluations in a broad sense and left the details to be bargained at the local level between districts and unions. This local arrangement has led to little progress in developing comprehensive evaluation plans. In his recent State of the State address, Governor Cuomo stated it strongly: “We need a meaningful teacher evaluation system. The legislation enacted in 2010 to qualify for *Race to the Top* didn’t work.”

### **Charter School Law**

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools ranked New York fifth in the nation for our successful charter law innovations in the past year.<sup>28</sup> In 2010, the state legislature lifted the charter cap from 200 to 460 schools. The law also allows nonprofit organizations, or charter management organizations, to operate more than one school at more than one site across New York. We still have room for improvement, though. In some cases, New York provides charter schools with access to public space, but the state does not provide equitable funding for charter school facilities and capital within the schools.

<sup>28</sup> <http://charterlaws.publiccharters.org/charterlaws/state/NY>

## **Striking Back Against the Gaps: NYCAN’s 2012 Policy Agenda**

# 4

This report demonstrates the need for urgent change in New York education policy in order to close our gaps and put our state back on track. That’s why NYCAN is announcing its 2012 inaugural legislative agenda, *The Empire State Strikes Back*, with three powerful, urgent goals for New York education reform.

### ***Strike 1: Equip Parents with a Trigger***

*Allow moms and dads to “take over” struggling schools*

A parent trigger law empowers parents to have a say in their children’s education by authorizing them to band together to “take over” struggling schools. Once they’ve pulled the trigger, parents can choose from several reform options, including converting the school into a charter school, firing the school administration or closing the school outright. The action is triggered if a majority of parents in a school sign a petition in support of the takeover.

A parent trigger law will dramatically increase parental involvement in education by demanding that parental concerns are recognized in a way that has never happened before. Parents in states that have enacted these policies have more control over their child’s educational fate.<sup>29</sup> For the first time, “unions” of parents may feel compelled to become engaged and take a stand for a better education for their children.<sup>30</sup> Parent trigger systems can lead to parents who are more informed about the education system as a whole and could create a pipeline of parent-leaders leading the way to meaningful change.<sup>31</sup>

A parent trigger law will provide parents for the first time with real bargaining power for change in their kids’ schools. In cases where parents desire real changes that do not rise to the level of a charter school conversion, turnaround or closure, parents can still organize to use their parent trigger signatures as a credible threat to force the school district to meet their demands for improving a school. This new bargaining power holds an incredible transformative power. Parents of every socioeconomic status will claim a real seat at the decision-making table for our public schools, requiring decisions to be made in the best interest of their kids.

The policy will reshape our public schools by empowering parents to improve their children’s low-performing schools with the urgency that the situation demands by putting power in the hands of the people most affected by and invested in our public schooling.

### ***Strike 2: Recruit Teaching Talent into the Empire State***

*Improve interstate teacher certification reciprocity*

Under New York’s current teacher certification reciprocity guidelines, in order to become certified to teach in New York State if relocating from another state, a teacher must either have taught for three years within the previous seven years, or come through a teacher certification program approved by the New York State Education Department.

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/24/education/24trigger.html?page\\_wanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/24/education/24trigger.html?page_wanted=all)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.laweekly.com/2010-12-09/news/Californias-Parent-Trigger>

<sup>31</sup> <http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/product/209/files/HendersonRpt.pdf>

The list of acceptable certification programs is limited, however, and does not include alternative certification programs from out of state. In addition to granting licenses to traditionally certified teachers from other states, the New York State Education Department should grant licenses to teachers prepared in out-of-state alternate routes as well.

Alternate certification programs have shown to be just as effective if not more effective than traditional routes. In fact, New York supports many certification pathways already such as Teach For America, Teaching Residents through Hunter College and the New York City Teaching Fellows. We should expand this list to include high-quality alternative out-of-state programs to expand the pool of high-quality teachers.

### ***Strike 3: Start College Early, Finish College Strong*** *State support for early college high schools*

Early college high schools are programs established within existing high schools that enable students to accrue college credit while they are still in school.

The New York State Legislature should pass a bill this legislative session to allocate state funds to continue early college programs, currently funded by a private grant. The bill would allow early college high schools to apply directly to the state's Higher Education Services Corporation for Tuition Assistance Program<sup>32</sup> funding to support early college programs with a high volume of low-income students. In turn, students participating in the program could earn up to two years of college credit before even graduating from high school, putting them well ahead of the curve and significantly increasing their chances of graduating with a college degree.<sup>33</sup>

By 2018, experts predict that 73 percent of all New York jobs will be middle- or high-skill meaning that qualified candidates will need training beyond high school, either in a technical setting or two- and four-year college degrees. With a changing economy and fewer jobs available for adults with only a high school degree, investing in early college initiatives is smart policy for the economic vitality of New York. The return on investment is significant not just for the kids participating in the programs, but also for the state. Estimates show that by financing early college high school programs, New York could see a return on investment of 254 percent in just 15 years and 648 percent in 25 years.<sup>34</sup>

**32** The New York State Tuition Assistance Program helps eligible New York residents pay tuition at approved schools in New York State. TAP recipients are typically students from low-income and disadvantaged families. For more information, please visit: [http://www.hesc.com/content.nsf/SFC/About\\_TAP](http://www.hesc.com/content.nsf/SFC/About_TAP)  
**33** <http://m.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S5647-2011>

**34** [http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/APA\\_ECHS\\_ROI\\_071906.pdf](http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/APA_ECHS_ROI_071906.pdf)

# Principles for Reform

# 5

There is growing knowledge of what works to dramatically improve student achievement, drawn from high-performing schools and districts across the country. Supporting these proven strategies doesn't mean trying to write every best practice into state law, but instead advancing three fundamental principles that work together to reward success, reduce failure and raise the quality of everything in between:

- *Greater Choices.* Our calcified education system is resistant to the innovations of educators, the desires of parents and the realities of the global economy. Expanding options for families injects innovation, competition and a grassroots level of accountability into the system. These choices should be supported by school finance systems that fund students based on their learning needs at the public schools of their choice.
- *Greater Accountability.* Over the past 20 years we made significant strides in developing rigorous state standards and aligned student assessment systems. We must now use the information collected through these systems to drive instruction and curriculum, expand public awareness of school performance, ground teacher evaluations in student results and close chronically failing schools.
- *Greater Flexibility.* For greater choices and accountability to translate into greater student achievement, our educators need greater flexibility to run their districts and schools. This means expanding alternative pathways to serving as a teacher or a principal and providing principals with greater control over staffing, instructional strategies and budget.

# About NYCAN

NYCAN: The New York Campaign for Achievement Now launched in January 2012 as an education reform advocacy organization building a movement of New Yorkers with the political will to enact smart public policies so that every New York child has access to a great public school. We are a branch of 50CAN: The 50-State Campaign for Achievement Now, a growing national network of state-based education reform advocacy groups with campaigns in Rhode Island, Minnesota, Maryland and New York based on the groundbreaking model developed by ConnCAN in Connecticut. NYCAN is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization funded by individual donors and foundations.

NYCAN is led by Founding Executive Director Christina Grant. A native New Yorker, Christina is a graduate of Hofstra University, the Teacher's College at Columbia University and Fordham University. In 2003, Christina became a New York City Teach For America corps member and went on to become a teacher at a KIPP school in the Bronx. Before joining NYCAN, Christina worked as managing director of new site development at Teach For America. She was previously the deputy director for the Office of Charter Schools at the New York City Department of Education.

[www.nycan.org](http://www.nycan.org)

