

The National Coalition ***on*** ***School Diversity***

May 6, 2017

Betty A. Rosa, *Chancellor*
New York State Board of Regents
Regents Office
State Education Building
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Re: School diversity in NY State ESSA Plan

Dear Chancellor Rosa and Regents:

The National Coalition on School Diversity (NCSO) is a network of civil rights organizations, university-based research centers, and state and local coalitions working together to expand support for policies that promote school diversity and the reduction of racial and socioeconomic isolation. An advisory panel of scholars and academic researchers whose work relates to equity, diversity, desegregation, and integration in our nation's public schools informs our work. See www.school-diversity.org for more information regarding how our organization supports diverse schools.

We were pleased to read the recent report of the Board of Regents' consideration of a formal policy statement regarding the importance of school diversity for all students,¹ and the proposed "High Concept Idea" referenced in that article,² focused on the promotion of racial and socioeconomic integration as an evidence-based intervention, as well as a metric for school evaluation in New York's State Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). We strongly support the Board's consideration and ultimate adoption of such a policy statement. In addition, given the prevalence of segregation

¹ See Monica Disare, "New York state plans to use new federal education law to help integrate schools," Chalkbeat N.Y., April 5, 2017, available at <http://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2017/04/05/new-york-state-plans-to-use-new-federal-education-law-to-integrate-schools/>

² Every Student Succeeds Act: "High Concept Ideas" for Consideration for Inclusion in State Plan - Promoting Socioeconomic and Racial Integration, available at <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/FB%20Tuesday%20-%20AI%20ESSA%20High%20Concept%20Ideas%20for%20Consideration%20for%20Inclusion%20in%20State%20Plan.pdf>

across school districts in both metropolitan areas and within suburban counties,³ we encourage the explicit recognition of and support for interdistrict integration strategies in the policy statement.⁴

Decades of research indicate that racially, culturally, and economically diverse schools supply both short- and long-term benefits for all students.⁵ Students in diverse schools perform better in the areas of math, science, reading, and critical thinking, and see improvements in graduation rates over segregated students.⁶ Furthermore, studies show diverse schools are better equipped than high-poverty schools to counteract the negative effects of poverty on student achievement.⁷ Research indicates that, over the long-term, students in diverse schools are more likely than students from segregated schools to attend diverse colleges, inhabit diverse neighborhoods, and choose diverse workplaces later in life.⁸ Students from diverse school settings also possess better critical thinking skills and analytical ability, and are more likely to form cross-racial friendships.⁹

New York has one of the most racially and socioeconomically diverse student populations in the country, but at the same time exhibits extreme degrees of segregation, which limits the educational outcomes and life chances of too many New Yorkers.¹⁰ Racial segregation and poverty concentration in schools are inexorably linked to unequal

³ For example, there is a high degree of segregation between many suburban school districts on Long Island. See "School Segregation Maps, 2013-2014," (ERASE Racism, 2015) available at <http://eraseracismny.org/our-work/education/433>.

⁴ See Kara Finnigan and Jennifer Holme, "Regional Educational Equity Policies: Learning from Inter-district Integration Programs," (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2015), available at <http://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo9.pdf>.

⁵ For a summary of this research, see Roslyn Mickelson, "School Integration and K-12 Educational Outcomes: A Quick Synthesis of Social Science Evidence," (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2015), available at <http://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo5.pdf>; Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, "How Non-Minority Students Also Benefit from Racially Diverse Schools," (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2012), available at <http://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo8.pdf>.

⁶ For a summary of this research, see Susan Eaton, "School Racial and Economic Composition & Math and Science Achievement," (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2011), available at <http://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo1.pdf>; Susan Eaton, "How the Racial and Socioeconomic Composition of Schools and Classrooms Contributes to Literacy, Behavioral Climate, Instructional Organization and High School Graduation Rates," (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2011), available at <http://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo2.pdf>.

⁷ For a summary of this research, see Philip Tegeler, Roslyn Mickelson, and Martha Bottia, "[What We Know about School Integration, College Attendance, and the Reduction of Poverty](#)," (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2011), available at <http://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo4.pdf>.

⁸ For a summary of this research, see Susan Eaton and Gina Chirichigno, "The Impact of Racially Diverse Schools in a Democratic Society," (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2011), available at <http://www.school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo3.pdf>.

⁹ *Supra* note 5. See also Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, "How Non-Minority Students Also Benefit from Racially Diverse Schools," (National Coalition on School Diversity, 2012), available at <http://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo8.pdf>.

¹⁰ Gary Orfield & John Kucsera, *New York State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction and a Damaged Future* (Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, 2014), available at: <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/ny-norflet-report-placeholder/Kucsera-New-York-Extreme-Segregation-2014.pdf>.

opportunity, and “strongly related to an array of factors that limit educational opportunities and outcomes...[including] less experienced and less qualified teachers, high levels of teacher turnover, less successful peer groups and inadequate facilities and learning materials.”¹¹

We strongly support New York’s potential adoption of school diversity as both a metric for evaluating schools and a trigger for intervention in schools targeted for additional support. In an environment where students can no longer rely on the federal government to support voluntary, community-driven attempts to integrate schools,¹² the actions you are considering in support of diverse schools would set the stage for New York to be a model for the rest of the nation to emulate.

We would welcome the opportunity to review and comment on the policy statement and metric before it is finalized, and would be happy to meet with the Chancellor and members of the New York State Board of Regents to discuss the state’s proposed ESSA plan, as well as the benefits of student diversity more generally. Please do not hesitate to contact us to schedule a mutually convenient time to meet.

Sincerely,

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¹¹ Gary Orfield et al., *E Pluribus... Separation: Deepening Double Segregation for More Students* (Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, 2012), 21, available at http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/mlk-national/e-pluribus...separation-deepening-double-segregation-for-more-students/orfield_epluribus_revised_complete_2012.pdf.

¹² See Emma Brown, “Trump’s Education Department nixes Obama-era grant program for school diversity,” Washington Post, March 29, 2017, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2017/03/29/trumps-education-department-nixes-obama-era-grant-program-for-school-diversity/>.

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