



**BEACON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES**

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**Ms. Meredith Heuer**  
*President*

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Beacon City School District  
Board of Education

November 2, 2020

Dr. Betty A. Rosa  
Interim Commissioner of Education  
New York State Education Department  
89 Washington Ave.  
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Dr. Rosa,

We urge you to be proactive in requesting federal waivers of assessments, accountability and reporting requirements that would enable you to cancel the New York State English Language Arts and Mathematics tests for elementary and middle school students for the 2020-21 school year. We also urge you to cancel the state Regents exams for the 2020-21 school year immediately. While we are proud of our reopening efforts, we cannot pretend that these new modes of instruction replicate pre-pandemic school conditions. Teachers are already bearing the heavy burden of significantly adapting their teaching and curricula to hybrid and remote learning and we strongly believe that they should not have to devote any of their limited time with students to test preparation when it is so clear that these tests cannot possibly be seen as 'fair' this year and it is inevitable that they will have to be cancelled.

This is an essential step in supporting our students, teachers and families through what we all recognize will be an incredibly difficult year, a year that we believe should be focused on healing from the trauma of COVID-19 crisis. We are sure that you will agree that testing is a source of stress and anxiety for teachers and students and is antithetical to our stated goal of providing social and emotional support to our students and families. Surely, you are as concerned as we are about the devastating cuts Governor Cuomo is slowly implementing. These cuts, and the threat of more, are forcing high need/low income school districts to make deep cuts to their personnel and programming, once more leaving Black, Brown, low income and immigrant students to bear the brunt of the state's budget deficit and COVID impact. Testing adds to this harm and will only serve to label these schools, that already have less than others, as failures. And the students, scoring lower on the tests, as "not as smart," or "not hard working," or "not as committed to education" as those in wealthier districts.

We recognize that it is at the discretion of the U.S. Department of Education to grant waivers on these assessments and so we add our request to those from a number of other states (Georgia, Michigan, South Carolina) so that we can continue this school year with a clear focus on what is most important for our students.

Sincerely,

*Meredith Heuer*

Meredith Heuer, President  
Board of Education