

## Commentary

# Our work continues



**By Betty Rosa**  
Regents Chancellor

Another school year is well underway. Teachers, students and parents are getting comfortable with new classes, schedules and routines. I still get energized by the flurry of back to school activity – and I bet you still do, too.

On the first day of school this year, I visited

PS 69, Journey Prep, an innovative Bronx elementary school where I saw amazing teaching and learning, a focus on the writing process, energized teachers and engaged students. I also visited schools in East Ramapo, where student performance is beginning to improve as a result of the state's financial investments and oversight efforts. I look forward to visiting many more of your schools throughout the year.

As someone who has spent nearly 46 years as a classroom teacher, a school leader, and a member of the Board of Regents, I know about the incredibly hard work that goes into getting your schools ready for a new school year. I truly appreciate the time and effort that you and your school staffs invest in getting all students off to a great start. Your work sets them up for a successful year.

Like your board, the Board of Regents has been busy getting ready for the new school year – and I could not be more excited about what's in store. As you likely know, Deputy Education Commissioner Beth Berlin, is serving as interim commissioner of education while the board and I conduct a search for our next commissioner. In her

six years at the State Education Department, Beth has proven to be a compassionate, capable and effective leader who is well respected by the board, her colleagues and the education community.

The important work of the Regents and SED will continue without interruption during this time of transition. Specifically, we are moving forward with our initiatives to foster equity for all of New York's schoolchildren; to implement our ESSA plan; and to continue providing professional learning opportunities around the Next Generation Learning Standards.

Additionally, we continue to focus intently on the critical issues surrounding New York's graduation measures. You may recall that I first proposed rethinking these measures in a February 2019 On Board column. I continue to believe, as I wrote in that article, that too many students – particularly our most vulnerable students – are leaving high school without a diploma.

At the July 2019 Board of Regents meet-

ing, I announced the creation of a blue-ribbon commission to review the research, practice and policies surrounding graduation measures. The commission will consider whether state exit exams, as a sole measure, improve student achievement, graduation rates and college readiness – and whether adding other measures of achievement could better serve New York's diverse student population as indicators of what they know and if they are career and college ready. The commission will consider whether those additional measures of achievement should include things like capstone projects, alternative assessments, and engagement in civic and community activities.

The commission – which will include representatives from the state's leading education stakeholders, including NYSSBA – will gather input from across the state to help inform recommendations to:

- Reconsider current diploma requirements.
- Ensure all students have access to multiple graduation measures.
- Ensure a transition plan timeline allows sufficient time to prepare for and implement any changes that may be adopted.

In short, the goal of the commission is to reaffirm what a New York State high school diploma should mean and what it ought to signify. I know that, as always, I can rely on the expertise of NYSSBA and its members to contribute to this discussion in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

Again, I welcome you back to another year of learning, discovery and growth. Thank you for all you do, every day, to support New York's children.



**Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa visits PS 69 in the Bronx on the first day of school.**

❖ Photo courtesy of the State Education Department