



January 27, 2014

New York State Education Department
Board of Regents, Room 110 EB
John King
Commissioner of Education
89 Washington Ave., Room 111
Albany, NY 12344

Email (RegentsOffice@mail.nysed.gov)

Dear Members of the Board of Regents and Commissioner King,

Decoding Dyslexia - NY is a grassroots movement led by concerned families and professionals to address the challenges and struggles many students with Dyslexia face in obtaining the appropriate, evidence based instruction in public schools. We are committed to working with schools and policy makers to promote better outcomes for children with Dyslexia. As up to one out of five people have Dyslexia, this is a respectable and much needed commitment.

DDNY is writing to oppose the recent proposed amendment by NYSED to its waiver renewal application under ESEA in regards to the assessment of students eligible through IDEA (2% Out of Level Testing).

There are numerous concerns regarding recent changes in NYS testing for the general student population, particularly students in Special Education. The "2% Out of Level" proposal is a "Band-Aid" approach for the all-inclusive problems that currently exist in NYS public schools. Why would we not look at the root cause and work on meaningful solutions that create high standards and assessments for all rather than a proposal that will have detrimental effects?

Historically speaking, the 2% Regulation has erroneously included children with Dyslexia (a neurological-brain based condition that affects up to 20% of the population) and related disabilities. Families with children that have Dyslexia already have to 'fight' and 'push' for even the basic understanding of what Dyslexia involves and the needed, appropriate instruction in NYS public schools. How can we issue a policy that allows districts to potentially disguise the performance of students in special education, potentially leading them off track for a diploma and increasing the educational gap that currently exists?

As parents of children that have Dyslexia, we implore you to reconsider this proposal. Dyslexia represents ~80% of students with a learning disability. Children with Dyslexia are often labeled as stupid, cognitively impaired and lazy. Yet, evidence has shown that this is highly inaccurate.

We urge you to reconsider the proposed 2% Regulation and explore a meaningful and successful strategy that will support students and teachers. We hold much hope for NYS as a leader and a progressive state that will work towards high standards for all students.

Thank you for our consideration and we look forward to future discussions.

Sincerely,

Debra A. Rafferty
Founding Member, DDNY Leader

Melissa Wilson
Founding Member, DDNY Leader

....because positive change is possible