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Media Release

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Education stakeholders reach agreement on fixing teacher and principal evaluations

Albany, New York - Today, the New York State Educational Conference Board and New York State Education Department announced an extraordinary agreement on legislation to rewrite the state's poorly designed teacher evaluation system that was imposed in 2010.

A result of collaborative communication among organizations and state leaders who care deeply about public education, the proposal was hand-delivered by NYSUT President Melinda Person and NYSED Commissioner Betty Rosa to the offices of the Legislature's education leaders.

The legislation, which was crafted by educators, superintendents, school boards, administrators, parents and principals, returns the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) system to local control and creates a system for measuring teacher and principal accountability that focuses on professional development and support, rather than an over-emphasis on testing.

Education chairs Sen. Shelley Mayer and Assemblymember Michael Benedetto congratulated the collective for reaching agreement and pledged their attention to the bill during this year's legislative session.

New York State Education Commissioner Betty A. Rosa said: "We owe it to our students, teachers, parents, and families to work together to develop a comprehensive and sustainable teacher evaluation system that meets the needs of all of our school communities across the state. Our focus is squarely on developing a system of continuous growth and development of teachers and principals that fosters

meaningful teaching and learning, empowering educators to excel and students to thrive. This proposed legislation, created with and for those impacted, is intended to accomplish that purpose.”

NYSUT President Melinda Person said: “Teachers welcome fair evaluations that are designed to help them hone their teaching skills and better serve students. Returning teacher evaluations to local control allows educators to again put the emphasis back on what matters most in our classrooms – teaching and learning. I want to acknowledge the tremendous collaboration that happened between all the different stakeholder groups who sat at the table and worked out the details of this almost 50-page bill. If you value the love of teaching and learning in our public schools, if you think our educators should be treated like the professionals they are, if you think that teaching to standardized tests has gone too far, then this is a great day.”

New York State Council of School Superintendents Executive Director Charles Dedrick said: “We support the new proposal to reform the teacher/principal evaluation system. It’s the result of months of discussions between our organization, other public school groups, and State Education Department leaders. Superintendents commonly see the current system as a waste of time or worse, actually harming efforts to improve teaching and school leadership and to recruit and retain education professionals. In a November survey, more than four times as many superintendents told us the system now in place has a negative rather than positive impact on improving instruction – 44% to 9%. The proposal would restore local control, eliminating some of the damaging parts of the current system and giving districts flexibility to negotiate plans that best fit their local circumstances.”

New York State Parent Teacher Association President Helen Hoffman and Executive Director Kyle Belokopitsky said: “NYS PTA is thrilled to see movement away from the current flawed and punitive system of evaluation, towards a model that truly supports educators in meaningful ways and recognizes the professionalism and work teachers and principals do each day in the classroom and school building. We are exceptionally proud of the work that Educational Conference Board members have accomplished this past year, working hand in hand with the State Education Department, to craft a new system that supports teaching, learning, and most importantly – our students. We look forward to swift introduction and passage in the Legislature, and know that parents and families will continue to partner with educators to make every child’s potential a reality as we Support Kids, Raise Awareness, together.”

School Administrators Association of New York State Executive Director Kevin Casey said: “On behalf of our over 20,000 active members we are pleased that discussions on APPR have resulted in a proposed bill that would revise the unwieldy

accountability system that currently exists. SAANYS, as well as our other Educational Conference Board colleagues, have been working on this overhaul and we will continue our efforts to implement a system that delinks state assessments from professional evaluations and provides increased flexibility to school districts, teachers and principals to design a local evaluation system that will serve to elevate professional practice in our schools.”

Conference of Big 5 School Districts Executive Director Jennifer K. Pyle said: “The Conference of Big 5 School Districts is pleased to have had the opportunity to work with our fellow ECB partners to develop a meaningful evaluation system that supports educators and is focused on what is best for all schools and the students served. We are truly grateful for the engagement and leadership Commissioner Rosa and her staff provided and for Senator Mayer and Assemblyman Benedetto’s commitment to ensuring that all voices were heard. The new system will afford our school districts the flexibility to create a system that promotes excellence and opportunities for all students.”

New York State School Boards Association Executive Director Robert Schneider said: “NYSSBA is proud to have worked side-by-side with our partners in the education community to develop this proposal. We believe this proposal ultimately will better serve our communities because it represents a shift in the way we evaluate our classroom teachers from a state-mandated process to one that is negotiated locally by school districts. As such, the proposal will restore local control over the teacher and principal evaluation process and allow each school district to craft a process that takes into account the unique circumstances in that district. In addition, the proposal will enable school district leaders to focus more on teacher development and improvement. This is particularly important now, given that New York faces a teacher shortage in certain critical subject areas. We should strive to create a more supportive environment for those in the classroom, while at the same time giving management the tools it needs to improve performance.”

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New York State United Teachers is a statewide union with nearly 700,000 members in education, human services and health care. NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.

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