

# Sound Basic Education Covenant

## *An Agenda for the New NYS Commissioner of Education*

**Dr. David Steiner has been sworn in as New York State's Commissioner of Education. Over 100 organizations and community leaders from across New York have endorsed an agenda for Commissioner Steiner – an agenda that ensures our state meets its moral and Constitutional obligation to provide educational opportunity and a quality education for all children.**

Advocates for Children  
African American/Caribbean Education Association, Inc. (NYC)  
African Services Committee (NYC)  
Alliance for Quality Education  
American Friends Service Committee (Syracuse chapter)  
Amparo Sadler, President, Central Islip Main Street Alliance  
Antoine Thompson, Member, State Senate (D-60<sup>th</sup>)  
Asian American Communications, Inc. (NYC)  
Bantu Community Organization (Buffalo)  
BCC Child Development Center, Inc.  
Bethesda Child Development Center (Rochester)  
Brian Evans, Grand Knight, Central Islip Knights of Columbus  
Brotherman's Progress Association (Buffalo)  
Campaign for Fiscal Equity  
Center for Excellence in Urban and Rural Education  
Center for Teen Empowerment (Rochester)  
Child Care, Inc.  
Children's Defense Fund – New York  
Chinese Progressive Association (NYC)  
Christopher Jacobs, At-Large Member, Buffalo Public School Board  
Citizen Action of New York  
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (NYC)  
Coalition for Economic Justice (Buffalo)  
Coalition of Northeast Associations (Rochester)  
Committee for Hispanic Children and Families (NYC)  
Community Advocates for Educational Excellence (Rochester)  
Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Member, State Assembly (D-Buffalo)  
Cypress Hills Advocates for Education (NYC)  
David M. Quintana, Board Member, Queens Community Board 10 (NYC)  
Demone Smith, Member, Masten District Common Council  
Denise Gibbs, Assistant Superintendent, Wyandanch Union Free School District  
Diana Coleman, Community Activist (Long Island)  
Dunbar Association (Syracuse)  
DuWayne Gregory, Suffolk County Legislator (D-Amityville)  
Early Care & Learning Council  
Education Voters of New York  
Family Education Alliance (Albany)  
Flower City Soccer League (Rochester)  
Frank Scott, Board Trustee, Roosevelt Union Free School District  
Gilford Monrose, Pastor, Mt. Zion Church of God (7th Day) (NYC)  
Gloria Green, PTO President, Wyandanch Union Free School District  
Goddard Riverside Community Center (NYC)  
Graham Windham (NYC)  
Haitian Americans United for Progress (NYC)  
Hispanic Federation  
Hispanics United of Buffalo  
James Crawford, Vice President, Wyandanch Union Free School District School Board  
Judi Bosworth, Nassau County Legislator (D-Great Neck)  
La Union - Fifth Ave. Committee (NYC)  
League of Women Voters of New York State  
Lisa Sweeney, Secretary, Central Islip Coalition of Good Neighbors  
Long Island Progressive Coalition  
Make the Road New York (NYC)  
Maya Chafe, Member, PTA, Professional Performing Arts Middle School (NYC)  
Metro Buffalo Alliance of Black School Educators (MBABSE)  
Metro Justice (Rochester)  
Mirabel Sisters Cultural and Community Center (NYC)  
Mission Consortium of Churches International (Rochester)  
National Action Network (Syracuse chapter)  
NEAD CDF Freedom Schools (Rochester)  
New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NYC)  
New Visions Community Services, Inc. (Rochester)  
New Visions Community Church (Rochester)  
New York ACORN  
New York City Coalition for Educational Justice (NYC)  
New York Civic Participation Project (NYC)  
New York Immigration Coalition (NYC)  
NYS Coalition for School-Based Health Centers  
Onondaga County NAACP  
Parents for Public Schools (Syracuse)  
Pat Prague, President, Central Islip-Islandia Chamber of Commerce  
Peace Action (Syracuse chapter)  
Peace Council of Central New York  
Progressive Democrats of America (Genesee Valley chapter)  
Public Policy & Education Fund  
Queens Parent's Advisory Council (NYC)  
Reducing Recidivism Group (Buffalo)  
Rev. Mack Smith, Trinity Lutheran Church (Wyandanch)  
Ricardo Montano, Suffolk County Legislator (D-Brentwood)  
Robert Jackson, Chair, Education Committee, City Council, (NYC)  
Robert Summerville, Board Trustee, Union Free School District  
Rochester City School District Parents' Council  
Ruth Mary McConnell, Chair, Mission Commission, Genesee Presbyterian Church (Rochester)  
Satasha Green Stephens, Ph.D, Present President, New York State Council for Exceptional Children  
School Leadership Team Support Empowerment Alliance (NYC)  
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy  
Serena Alfieri, Associate Director of Policy, Women in Prison Project  
Southwest Area Neighborhood Association, Inc. (Rochester)  
Stop the Violence Coalition (Buffalo)  
Successful Pathways of Youth for Christ (Rochester)  
Susan Beckerman, Member, Queens Parent's Advisory Council  
Syracuse Model Neighborhood Facility  
TaxNightmare.org  
The After School Corporation  
Urban Youth Collaborative (NYC)  
WUFO Community Radio Station (Buffalo)  
William Softee, Board Trustee, Central Islip Union Free School District  
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation  
Working Families Party (Syracuse chapter)  
Working Families Party (Suffolk County chapter)  
Wyandanch Union Free School District  
YKASEC - Empowering the Korean American Community (NYC)

# Sound Basic Education Covenant

We are requesting that David Steiner, the new Commissioner of Education, endorse this Sound Basic Education Covenant with the students of the State of New York, many of whom have been consistently denied their constitutionally guaranteed right to a sound basic education, and their parents and families. By supporting this agenda, the Commissioner of Education is embracing the Declaration, sharing in the Principles, and committing to provide the leadership needed to advance the Priorities outlined herein.

## ***Declaration:***

*The fundamental responsibility of the Commissioner of Education is to deliver a “sound basic education” to all the students of the State of New York. The people of New York are entitled to a Commissioner of Education who is committed to educational accountability, who provides leadership and vision, who is committed to full transparency so that all New Yorkers have access to information relevant to their children’s academic future, and who implements and enforces the law and the Commissioner’s regulations in a way that is consequential for all parties involved. As the primary public official responsible for the education of New York’s students, the Commissioner of Education must provide the public leadership necessary to ensure that all students have access to their constitutionally guaranteed right to a sound basic education.*

## ***Principles:***

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** Proven effective practices, effective teachers, and equitable resources to help students achieve the highest possible outcome. At graduation every student should be college, job market, and citizenship ready.

**LEADERSHIP:** Vision, guidance, support and advocacy to provide a sound basic education for every student.

**ENFORCEMENT:** Commitment to timely enforcement of relevant laws and regulations in relation to all school districts.

**TRANSPARENCY:** Access of parents and community members to the educational process and to the decision-making procedures of local school districts and the State Education Department.

## ***Priorities:***

1. Broaden the definition of student achievement beyond test scores and graduation rates to include preparation for college, the job market, and citizenship--which are the objective purposes of the “sound basic education” that is every New York student’s constitutional right.
2. Close the achievement gaps related to race, language, income, and disability and require straightforward, clearly understandable, and publicly accessible reporting by school districts within their local communities on actions taken and progress made in closing these gaps.
3. Prioritize the specific needs of English language learners (ELL) through the creation of a senior level director who will be responsible for developing and implementing a strategy for increasing ELL outcomes. Ensure that school districts utilize those state aid formula dollars that are generated based upon ELL enrollment to invest in proven programs and services to support ELL success.
4. Build on the successes of the Contract for Excellence and overcome the shortcomings in its implementation by fully and thoroughly enforcing the law and Commissioner’s regulations including but not limited to, the public disclosure and participation process, student achievement targets, and investing in best practices. Expand this model of accountability to cover more funding resources and more under-performing schools and districts in a manner that ensures effective coordination between and consolidation of planning and accountability tools.
5. Provide early childhood education, starting from birth with full-day services for three-and four-year-olds as the Board of Regents has envisioned.
6. Provide a rich and diverse educational environment that will provide every student with broad-based opportunities including but not limited to arts education, physical education, high quality after school programs, career and technical education, and transition services for students with disabilities.
7. Require every school district to identify and deliver the educational resources students need to meet the new requirement that all general education students must earn a Regents diploma to graduate high school to ensure that this new standard is a pathway to success as opposed to a roadblock.
8. Open up the process by which decisions are made at the district and state level, by providing real opportunities for parents, students, and community members to provide meaningful input and participate in the process - which requires that they receive substantive information about allocation of resources, school district and school accountability status, educational decision-making, and evaluation and analysis of data regarding resource investments and student outcomes.
9. Convene a Task Force that includes the members of the Board of Regents, the Commissioner of Education, senior level State Education Department personnel, and representatives of parent and community organizations to monitor and assess the fulfillment of this contract and to generate joint recommendations and action steps to achieve the principles, goals and outcomes outlined in this Covenant.