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Dear New York State Parents and Families,

Today, we are releasing our 2013 test results. You will notice that more students struggled on this year's test than in previous years. This is because we changed the expectations for New York State students when we adopted the Common Core State Standards. The Board of Regents adopted these standards in 2010 and teachers and principals have been working to make important changes in student learning over the last 3 years. It is exciting that these changes have already begun, but our test results tell us that we have a long way to go.

We are making this change to the Common Core State Standards because we want every single one of our students to be on track for college and careers by the time they graduate from high school. Our former standards did not prepare all of our students for 21st century college and careers. The Common Core State Standards will:

- help students gain the knowledge and skills that they need to think and work at that deeper level
- create opportunities for all students to excel at reading, writing, speaking, listening, language and math
- support students to think critically about what they read and the math that they do
- allow teachers and students to focus on fewer critical concepts in mathematics more deeply
- build students' abilities to apply what they have learned to the real world
- ensure that all students can communicate strong ideas and arguments in writing and react powerfully to what they read

The Common Core State Standards are new, challenging standards and we know that students won't be able to meet these standards without the support of teachers, parents and communities. In particular, we have been working with teachers and principals to understand how instruction should change to get students where they need to be. Teachers and principals have been working to make these important changes to help their students to achieve at higher levels.

You have likely seen and will continue to experience noticeable changes in what and how your child is learning in school. This could include what you see in classrooms, finished work that comes home, or even homework assigned to your child. We have created a *Parents Backpack Guide to Common Core Standards* to help you look for these changes and many other resources to help support your children's learning (see <http://www.engageny.org/parent-and-family-resources>). For a better sense of what the Common Core looks like in action in classrooms across the state, see the short video entitled "Teaching is the Core" at: <http://www.engageny.org/resource/teaching-is-the-core>.

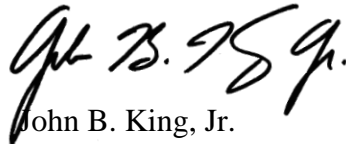
I want to make it very clear that the change in test scores (including, possibly, one in your child's score) does not mean that students are learning less or that teachers and schools are performing worse than last year. Proficiency rates – the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standards – on the new Common Core assessments cannot be compared with last year's proficiency results since the old scores are from an old test based on the former standards. This is a new beginning and starting point that will provide better, clearer information to parents, teachers, and principals about what our children know and are able to do. The results from these assessments will help you and your school directly address the learning needs of your child so that he or she gets and/or stays on track for college and career success.

Parent reports are currently being prepared and will be sent to you near the start of the school year. With these reports, we will provide you with detailed information on how best to understand the results and resources that you can use to help support next steps for your child.

We all want the same thing: for all of our children to succeed in 21st century college and careers, to be good citizens, and to contribute to their community. The changes that we are making now provide us a new opportunity to make sure that every single New York State student graduates from high school prepared and able to make choices about his or her own future in a dynamic and competitive economy. Seeing a change in scores can be challenging for any parent, school, community, or state, but we know that where we are now only marks a beginning.

It is my great honor to work for you and your child every day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John B. King, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

John B. King, Jr.
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