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MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the New York State Board of Regents

FROM: Dr. Julie Davis Lutz, Legislative Co-Chair
Dr. Walter F. Schartner, Legislative Co-Chair

DATE: January 16, 2015

RE: Appointment of New Commissioner of Education

As you undertake the appointment of a new Commissioner of Education, we, the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association, believe that this is a critically important time for public education in our state, and that this is a critically important decision. Most importantly, we believe that the next commissioner should have a clear and unequivocal commitment to a sound and basic public education for all children.

It has been our experience that the recent reform agenda in New York State has been driven by a handful of powerful individuals. This reform has also excluded meaningful participation and connection to the public, superintendents of schools, and boards of education. Although there are many characteristics that make an individual a good leader, we believe that there are several that are critical in our next commissioner. We offer these leadership qualities and behaviors for your consideration as essential for the new commissioner:

- Experience as a successful superintendent of a public school system with a background that includes highly effective building level leadership and classroom teaching.
- The temerity, resilience, and willingness to question and demand carefully researched information prior to initiating new reforms.
- The willingness to call for an immediate reconsideration of any current reforms that are not working.

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- Honesty, empathy, and exceptional communication skills, with the willingness to embrace an ongoing dialogue among school leaders, board members, parents, and community members, not just in times of crisis.
- Great integrity and understanding of the importance of collaboration with all stakeholders.
- Maintain a commitment that ensures superintendents and school board members are the primary resource for determining the value of new reforms and initiatives before they are advanced.

Our public education system is one of the most significant public services a democratic society provides; in selecting this individual please keep that significance – ensuring that the education of every child in New York is at the center of your decision making. As Horace Mann reminds us, "Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery."

We stand ready and willing to assist you throughout your decision making, and have confidence that you will do your very best to choose a leader who will support the public education of children in our great state.

JDL/WFS/mp

c: SCSSA Members