

Arva Rice, New York Urban League

Hello my name is Arva Rice, I am President and CEO of the New York Urban League. The mission of the New York Urban League (NYUL) is to enable African Americans and other underserved ethnic communities to secure a first class education, economic self-reliance, and equal respect of their civil rights through programs, services and advocacy in our highly diversified city

As a legacy civil rights organization, we recognize the power and necessity of high standards and data collection in the attainment of equity and excellence at scale. Throughout our history, the civil rights movement has relied upon data to identify and address disparities that affect African-Americans and other underserved communities. From striking down school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education* to shining light on the school-to-prison pipeline — data have been used to advocate for civil rights in education. The quality of today's assessment has improved vastly from what we had in the past. Opting out would leave us with no other alternative and too many organizations have worked too hard to go back to the drawing board. As of right now the new standards are what we have in front of us, and the current standards are a positive way for us to address the inequality in education that too many families experienced in their schools.

All parents want their children to succeed in school, and they have the right to know how well and in what ways their children are excelling or struggling. Education stakeholders, including parents, also have a right to know where education systems are making progress and where they need intervention. While there are other ways to evaluate learning, statewide annual assessments are the only objective, consistent, and comparable measure of student success. Assessments are part of life, and, while they are not comfortable, they are necessary.

Test scores are on the rise. When compared to two years ago, the number of students proficient in math is up 7 percent. English scores are improving too. In New York City the gains provide more reason for optimism. This year, 35.2 percent of NYC students achieved proficiency, which is approaching parity with the statewide number. The numbers for minority students in New York City were encouraging as well. African American and Hispanic students made progress in both math and English. There is, of course, still much more work to be done, but this year's improvements are a strong step. Closing the persistent achievement gap will take a consistent set of higher standards and accurate measurements – that's exactly what we have here in New York.

Now the implementation of the common core has been in no way a perfect one, but we needed to better equip our students to compete in a global economy. The common core is a necessary step to ensure that students not only in our state but from across the country are held to a certain expectation that will enable them to succeed in life.