



INTERNATIONALS NETWORK
FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Opening doors to the American Dream...

TESTIMONY BY
Claire E. Sylvan, Executive Director
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before the
New York State Common Core Task Force
Regional Common Core Listening Session
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My name is Claire Sylvan, and I am the Founding Executive Director for Internationals Network for Public Schools. I would like to thank the Common Core Task Force for holding these listening sessions to inform your comprehensive review of the Common Core in New York State.

Internationals Network is the sole school and professional development organization devoted exclusively to providing quality education to adolescents who are immigrant English language learners. Having expanded Internationals Network from four schools in New York City to over 22 network schools and academies in four states and the nation's capital, Internationals Network has demonstrated outstanding success in graduating immigrant students who are prepared for colleges and careers. There are currently 15 Internationals High Schools located in New York City. In four years, these schools graduate 58 percent of their students, while the four-year citywide graduation rate for ELLs is 32 percent. The six-year graduation rate in these schools is 77 percent, compared to 57 percent of ELLs citywide.

We support the Common Core State Standards' emphasis on developing the critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills students need to succeed in college and careers. A key component of the International High School approach is experiential learning with curriculum and instruction centered primarily around project-based activities that culminate in a product—such as an experiment or presentation—which builds these critical skills.

In our schools, students' academic and linguistic growth, skills, and mastery of Common Core standards are assessed through portfolios that comprise authentic tasks and/or classroom projects developed over a period of time to demonstrate understanding. Such performance-based assessments are more appropriate for English language learners who are still developing their proficiency in English while they are also learning subject-area content, rather than State standardized tests intended to measure student's mastery of Common Core standards. Such tests are unable to adequately measure what ELLs know and can do.

Currently students in International High Schools are able to graduate by completing performance-based assessments in some subjects instead of taking all five Regents exams. This is made possible through a 2-year State waiver specifically for these schools. We encourage New York State to continue to explore options for sustaining pathways like this, as well as creating and expanding additional graduation pathways that leverage performance-based assessments, especially for our State's English language learners.