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A Petition for Education Scholars

John Yinger

The Maxwell School, Syracuse University, joyinger@syr.edu

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It's Elementary

A Monthly Column by EFAP Director John Yinger

June 2016

A Petition for Education Scholars

This column takes the form of a petition for education scholars to sign. The petition calls for expanded research by the New York State Education Department and for the creation of a longitudinal student data set that scholars can use, with appropriate steps to protect student confidentiality. This petition will eventually be sent to MaryEllen Elia, the New York State Commissioner of Education; to Betty Rosa, Chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents (who announced the formation of a research work group in April); and to other education policy decision makers in New York.

If you are an education scholar and would like to sign this petition, please send an e-mail to Kitty Nasto (kmnasto@maxwell.syr.edu) indicating that you would like to add your name. Comments on the petition or suggestions of policy makers to send it to are also welcome. A list, regularly updated, of the scholars who have signed the petition will be posted at the EFAP website (<http://cpr.maxwell.syr.edu/efap/index.html>).

For additional information on Chancellor Rosa's announcement and on the importance of student-level data sets and of university-based consortia, see:

Monica Disare, "On Rosa's first day as Regents chief, she signals a shift to a slower pace of change." *Chalkbeat*, April 18, 2016. Available at: <http://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2016/04/18/on-rosas-first-day-as-regents-chief-she-signals-a-shift-to-a-slower-pace-of-change/#.V3fdPJDD-fA> .

"Research Using Longitudinal Student Data Systems: Findings, Lessons, and Prospects," a special issue of *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, May 2015.

Deborah H. Cunningham and Jim Wyckoff, "Policy Makers and Researchers Schooling Each Other: Lessons in Educational Policy from New York," *Education Finance and Policy*, Summer 2013, pp. 275–286.

John Yinger, "New York's Missing Data," *It's Elementary*, April 2016. Available at: http://cpr.maxwell.syr.edu/efap/about_efap/ie/April2016.pdf

Expanding Education Policy Research in New York State: A Petition

We, the undersigned scholars in education policy and education finance, urge the State of New York to expand the research capacity of the New York State Education Department (NYSED) so that it can (1) collaborate with a university-based consortium to support independent policy-relevant research and (2) prepare and analyze data sets that follow individual students over time and that can be used for research by NYSED and this consortium.

These steps compliment the formation of a Regents research work group, under the leadership of Regent Judith Johnson, to help ensure that Regents policy decisions are grounded in high-quality, relevant research. The formation of this work group was announced by the Chancellor of the Board of Regents, Betty Rosa, in April. These steps are also badly needed to bolster the research capacity of NYSED, which in recent years has reduced both its research staff and its efforts to collaborate with independent researchers.

As documented on the web site of the National Center for the Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (www.caldercenter.org), many states have conducted research using longitudinal student data sets and gained invaluable evidence on the effectiveness of a wide range of educational programs. This research has been conducted under rules that protect the confidentiality of student data; similar rules could be devised for New York.

Moreover, from 1997 to 2011 NYSED worked very successfully with the university-based Education Finance Research Consortium, which facilitated more than 40 separate research products on education finance. Many states use a similar consortium for research based on student-level data sets. New York should do the same.

New York State is far behind the rest of the nation in recognizing the responsibility of a state education department to help determine the educational programs that best serve the state's student population. We urge elected officials in New York to give NYSED the tools it needs to meet this responsibility.

Signed,

John Yinger, Professor of Economics and Public Administration, The Maxwell School, Syracuse University