



**TO:** Higher Education Committee  
P-12 Education Committee

**FROM:** John L. D'Agati *John L. D'Agati*  
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**SUBJECT:** Statewide Framework for Career Ladder Pathways

**DATE:** June 8, 2015

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**SUMMARY**

**Issue for Discussion**

Staff will provide the Board of Regents with an update on the culminating resources and tools stemming from the four rounds of the Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) program. In addition, the Department will provide the Board with recommended next steps in the strategy for implementing a statewide framework for career ladder pathways to help ensure all students have equitable access to the most effective educators.

**Reason(s) for Consideration**

For information.

**Proposed Handling**

This item will come before a joint meeting of the Higher Education Committee and P-12 Education Committee for discussion at the June 2015 meeting.

## **Background Information**

### ***Rationale for Career Ladder Pathways***

The statewide graduation rate is 74.9 percent.<sup>1</sup> However, only 31 percent of New York State (NYS) high school students who entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2009 graduated college and career ready, as marked by an Advanced Designation diploma, and only 37 percent as marked by aspirational scores on the English and math Regents Exams.<sup>2</sup> Great teachers and leaders are critical to students' success.

Highly effective educators across New York State are making dramatic differences in student learning. New York State equity data revealed that students who scored a Level 1 had a 65 percent chance of scoring a Level 2 or higher if they were assigned for two consecutive years to teachers who, in the prior year, were rated Highly Effective. Conversely, if students who scored a Level 1 were assigned to teachers not rated Highly Effective for the next two years, the students only had a 26 percent chance of scoring a Level 2 or higher. Students who scored a Level 1 who were taught for two years in a row by a teacher rated Highly Effective were almost 7 times more likely to score a Level 3 or above in 2013-14 than their peers who were not assigned to highly effective teachers

(<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2015Meetings/April/Equity.pdf>).

The New York State Education Department is committed to improving teaching and learning so that *all* students graduate college and career ready. The Department aims to support Local Education Agencies (LEAs) as they continue to develop and refine strategically planned comprehensive talent management systems. Career ladder pathways are viewed as a critical lever in the State's equity strategy to improve teaching and learning and close achievement gaps by addressing the talent management challenges of preparing, recruiting, developing, retaining, and providing equitable access to the most effective educators. As a result of the implementation of multiple career ladder pathways, students and educators will have access to continuously growing and developing educator leaders.

### ***Background***

The Department has long believed in the power and potential of providing career advancement opportunities for excellent educators. By serving in diverse leadership positions these educators are able to transform teaching and learning.

In the State's 2010 Race to the Top (RTTT) application, the Department proposed to establish a Teacher Career Development Continuum (TCDC) and a Principal Career Development Continuum (PCDC) within the New York State

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<sup>1</sup> New York State Education Department. (2014, June). *Graduation Rates: Students Who Started 9th Grade in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009*. Retrieved June 2014, from NYSED:

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2014/June2014/2013GradRate.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

certification system utilizing performance-based assessments that incorporate student growth. This proposal aimed to support LEAs in using Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluation results to make critical staffing decisions such as identifying and deploying effective teachers and leaders in career ladder pathways for roles such as mentors, instructional and evaluation coaches, department chairs, and other leadership positions. Career ladder pathways (also referred to as teacher and principal career development continuums) were envisioned under RTTT to provide LEAs with a State-developed measure of differentiated educator effectiveness that could be used to recognize and reward the most effective teachers and principals with supplemental compensation (<http://usny.nysed.gov/rttt/application/criteriapriorities.pdf>).

In 2012, as part of the Department's RTTT implementation plans, Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) grants began providing LEAs the opportunity to develop, implement, or enhance career ladder pathways using the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (TLE) Continuum (<https://www.engageny.org/resource/improving-practice>). The \$83 million STLE competitive grant program was intended to help applicants integrate evaluations into a coherent system of support for educators throughout their careers. Through collaboration between labor and management, LEAs participating in the STLE grant program developed or enhanced a comprehensive systems approach to continuously meet the needs of schools and students and ensure more equitable access to the most effective educators. Approximately 31 percent of grantees have partnered with institutions of higher education (IHEs) in order to better prepare future educators. One hundred percent of grantees were focused on retaining their top talent through implementation of career ladder pathways. More than 72 percent of grantees worked to increase the effectiveness of their staff by developing targeted professional development based on educator evaluation ratings. Nearly 65 percent of STLE grantees used financial stipends to reward educators for extending their reach through additional roles and responsibilities, and more than 25 percent of the LEAs included differentiated incentives for work associated within hard-to-staff subject areas and buildings. Further impact of STLE programs is evidenced in the State's recently updated equity plan found on the Department's web site at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/T2/HQT-Equitable.html>.

The Department believes the overall quality of teaching and learning can be raised through the implementation of comprehensive systems of talent management, including sound implementation of the teacher and principal evaluation system. Such systems develop programs that focus on various elements of a strategically planned TLE Continuum, including preparation, recruitment and placement, induction and mentoring, evaluation, ongoing professional development/professional growth, performance management, and career ladders. In doing so, these systems can address common talent management challenges that serve as barriers to student achievement and equal education opportunity.

The 221 STLE LEAs, representing over a third of the State, over half a million students and approximately 42,000 teachers and 1,000 principals, have been able to better address student achievement outcomes and increase the quality, quantity, and diversity of their educator workforce through the comprehensive use of the continuum

components, rather than viewing each as an individual initiative. Through STLE the Department has been able to see how educator leadership in career ladder pathways, connected with the evaluation system and analysis of student learning, is an effective strategy to address educational inequities across the State and to close achievement gaps. Extensive site visits, regular reporting, and status update calls have allowed the Department to better understand the ways in which STLE grantees have designed career ladder pathways that provide career advancement opportunities and support efforts across multiple components of the TLE Continuum while recognizing and rewarding excellence. This work has been noted favorably in interviews, focus group discussions, and written reflections by educators serving in leadership roles through STLE. (Watch this video to see how educators across New York State define teacher leadership: <https://www.engageny.org/resource/what-is-a-teacher-leader>).

STLE grantees have provided the Board of Regents with concrete examples of how comprehensive talent management systems and career ladder pathways can address student and talent management needs. The Board received an update about the STLE program in January 2014<sup>3</sup> and heard from panels of grantees in November 2014<sup>4</sup> and March 2015<sup>5</sup>. At the November 2014 Board of Regents meeting, central office staff and educator leaders from Greece Central Schools and Huntington Union Free School District shared how they are expanding the reach of the most effective teachers and leaders through systems such as instructional focus walks, peer coaching, and regular analysis of student performance (<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2014/November2014/1114p12hed2.pdf>). In order to share these promising practices with stakeholders across the State, at the April 2015 Board of Regents meeting, the Department released the “Ensuring Equitable Access to the Most Effective Educators” video series accessible on EngageNY (<https://www.engageny.org/content/studio-reflections-how-ensure-equitable-access-most-effective-educators>).

In December 2014, the Board of Regents included \$80M for the continuation of the Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (STLE) program in its 2015-16 Regents State Aid Proposal. Although this request was not granted, the Department will continue to support LEAs in their implementation of career ladder pathways. LEAs also have other funding sources available that can support career ladder pathways, such as Title IIA funds. The Department has incorporated the STLE work and career ladder pathways into the State’s updated equity plan, which was submitted to the United States Department of Education on June 1, 2015. By using evaluation results in the design and implementation of robust career ladder pathways, LEAs are able to support the implementation of comprehensive talent management systems that can address the

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<sup>3</sup> January 2014 Board Item: <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2014/January2014/114p12hed1.pdf>;  
January 2014 presentation: <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2014/January2014/P12HESTLE2.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> November 2014 Board Item: <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2014/November2014/1114p12hed2.pdf>; November 2014 presentation: <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2014/November2014/HESTLE.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> March 2015 Board Item: <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2015Meetings/March/315p12hed1.pdf>;  
March 2015 presentation: <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2015Meetings/March/TIPsPIPs.pdf>

unique needs of students and staff, as well as to mitigate the barriers to equal education opportunity for all students

<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2015Meetings/April/415p12hed2.pdf>.

### ***Stakeholder Engagement***

The Department engaged in dialogue regarding statewide aspirations for educator leadership in career ladder pathways with numerous stakeholder and advisory groups, at the national, state, regional, and local levels throughout the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years. Through in-person meetings, site visits, surveys, and focus groups the Department was able to gather feedback and input from teachers, school leaders, central office staff, board of education members, community and national organizations and experts, parents, students, and IHEs, among others. The Department's recommendations were also informed by feedback received from members of the following state-based groups: BOCES District Superintendents; Commissioner's Advisory Council (CAC); Commissioner's Teacher Advisory Council (TAC); Professional Standards & Practices Board (PSPB) Subcommittee; and the Staff and Curriculum Development Network (SCDN).

At the start of the 2014-15 school year, the Department assembled an STLE Advisory Board, comprised of 13 superintendents and members of their leadership teams from LEAs that represent the geographic and demographic diversity of New York State. STLE Advisory Board Members were asked to collaborate with, and present to, other stakeholder groups on the development of career ladder pathways, submit concrete tools, resources, and models for inclusion in the Department's guidance, provide feedback and input on draft materials to inform the state's direction, and potentially serve as model LEAs for New York State educators. In spring 2015, two independent, non-profit organizations led separate collections of educator perceptions on educator leadership and career ladder pathways through surveys and multiple rounds of focus groups. The Department has also engaged state-based and national organizations in dialogue regarding promising practices in the implementation of career ladder pathways as well as examined other state and LEA models.

### ***A Framework for New York State Career Ladder Pathways***

Collectively, these diverse stakeholder perspectives contributed to the development of a framework with guiding principles for New York State Career Ladder Pathways. The framework is ultimately aligned with the State's updated equity plan and is designed to ensure students have equitable access to effective educators and graduate college and career ready. Based on extensive feedback from stakeholders, the Department does not recommend that the State develop, or LEAs be required to adopt, any specific or additional teacher or principal leadership standards or certification or annotation levels in order to develop and implement career ladder pathways.

The framework that is proposed by the Department is comprised of four main components which outline the Department's underlying beliefs, assumptions, and expectations for career ladder pathways. The framework:

1. Is grounded in the Department's core beliefs;
2. Is designed to address five common talent management challenges;
3. Permits LEAs significant flexibility with minimum state guidelines; and
4. Emphasizes implementation and refinement through continuous improvement processes.

A system for career ladder pathways should focus on a progression of leadership roles that provide high-performing educators with meaningful opportunities for career advancement, ultimately aiding in the attraction, development, and retention of great educators who can significantly improve student outcomes. As LEAs consider educator career ladder pathways and leadership roles, it is important for them to develop strong systems that emphasize accountability, professional development, and are sustainable over time.

**Core Beliefs:** First, the framework is grounded in the notion that *all* students can achieve college and career readiness. Centered on the TLE Continuum, the Department believes the overall quality of teaching and learning can be raised through the development of comprehensive talent management systems rooted in sound implementation of teacher and principal evaluation. LEAs should thoughtfully consider how the implementation of career ladder pathways can be used as part of a local strategy to ensure students have equitable access to the most effective educators. LEAs may decide locally to expand upon the NYS Teaching Standards and Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards to explain how teacher and principal leaders are expected, within their own local contexts, to demonstrate and model the highest level of competency in their leadership.

**Common Talent Management Challenges:** In order to increase the quantity, quality, and diversity of the educator workforce, the framework is designed to address specific and emergent needs. Through research and the collaborative sharing of lessons learned through the STLE program, the Department has determined that five common talent management struggles often contribute significantly to issues of equity. LEAs can better prepare, recruit, develop, retain, and extend the reach of the most effective educators through their systemic use of the TLE Continuum.

**Significant Flexibility with Minimum State Guidelines:** The framework permits LEAs significant flexibility with minimum state guidelines to design career ladder pathways based on their local context. The Department recommends that the State continue to include minimum selection criteria to ensure educator leaders are those rated at a minimum Effective. While the Department recommends local flexibility in implementation decisions, LEAs must be clear about defining what effective outcomes will look like as a result of implementing career ladder pathways (see also continuous improvement processes below).

After extensive stakeholder feedback, the Department does not recommend that the State mandate, develop, or formally adopt any of the following:

- Certification and annotation for educator leaders;
- Teacher leader standards;
- The title of rungs; and
- Required roles and responsibilities of positions.

Since local talent management needs and student achievement vary dramatically across the State, the Department supports local flexibility to tailor career ladder pathways to best meet emergent needs in accordance with guidance, toolkits, and frameworks provided by the Department.

**Continuous Improvement Processes:** The framework emphasizes that career ladder pathways should be implemented and refined through continuous improvement processes. LEAs should have systems and structures in place to monitor progress and program impact on measurable goals and outcomes in order to inform refinements as needed. The continuous improvement process should measure the extent to which the implemented system functions as designed; intended outcomes are achieved; key stakeholder groups understand and are involved in the work; and the system is cost-effective and sustainable. LEAs should work with local partners to identify and provide regular training and job-embedded professional development opportunities for educator leaders. The design of career ladder pathway positions and the support provided to educator leaders should tie meaningfully to the LEA's comprehensive professional development plan, as well as the LEA's talent management strategy. Importantly, LEAs should monitor stakeholder perceptions of the career ladder pathways and commit to implementing necessary change, training, and further communications, as necessary.

Collectively, these four components are informed by significant stakeholder feedback and help to establish clear expectations for educator leadership in career ladder pathways, while still providing the State's nearly 700 LEAs and educators the autonomy needed to develop innovative and effective models based on their unique needs.

### ***Next Steps for the Expansion of Career Ladder Pathways***

In May 2015, Assistant Commissioner Julia Rafal-Baer was joined by a diverse team of New York State teacher and principal leaders to participate in the "Teach to Lead Summit", an initiative jointly convened by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and the U.S. Department of Education. At this summit, the New York State team strategized around the expansion of educator leadership opportunities for the 2015-16 school year and beyond.

In collaboration with national experts, critical friends, and practitioners from the field, the New York State team developed plans to broaden the reach of educator leadership throughout the State. This New York State team is committed to continuing its work and will meet at a subsequent summit in July and throughout the 2015-16

school year in a newly developed council. The council will provide strategic guidance to Department staff and present its recommendations for continued expansion and enhancement of career ladder pathways by the end of the 2015-16 school year. The council will support the Department in continuing the process of obtaining feedback and perspectives from diverse stakeholders, further developing the Department's toolkits and roadmaps around career ladder pathways, and developing and implementing a "Teacher Leadership Sharing Tour" during the 2015-16 school year.

### ***Technical Assistance and Support for Career Ladder Pathways Implementation***

Although one-third of the State has developed and implemented career ladder pathways through their work under the STLE program, the other two-thirds are likely to range in familiarity and readiness. All LEAs will require support to continuously enhance their career ladder pathways. The Department will provide the following types of technical assistance and support:

1. The Department will support and guide LEAs to use evaluation results to design and implement comprehensive talent management strategies that address multiple components of the TLE Continuum, including robust career ladder pathways. As outlined in the State's equity plan, the Department will continue to support the professional development of teachers and principals, the ongoing facilitation of peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and the potential provision of district-level equity reports. In addition, the Department is dedicated to continued advocacy of funding sources that will further sustain career ladder pathways, while helping LEAs to advance strategies that re-allocate existing funds, such as Title IIA dollars.
2. The Improving Practice page on EngageNY will continue to feature resources to support the systemic use of the TLE Continuum. Resources such as the "Improving Practice Video Spotlights" allow users to see the promising practices that have taken place through STLE. The Department will continue to update this page with tools and resources that support talent management systems (<https://www.engageny.org/resource/improving-practice>).
3. The new Strengthening Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Interactive Map highlights 25 LEAs that have participated in the STLE grant program. The program summaries are intended to provide users with insight into how to further support teachers' and principals' growth and development. Descriptions of teacher and principal leadership roles and responsibilities serve as models for those interested in developing or enhancing their current career ladder pathways. The identification of initial impact and cost savings that LEAs have experienced are promising outlooks for others. Users are able to hover over LEA map points to learn about a specific district, or refine their search using the available filters. This map will continue to be built out and enhanced during the 2015-16 school year based on user feedback and stakeholder requests (<http://www.nysed.gov/stle>).

4. The New York State Career Ladder Pathways Toolkit will build off the Engage-Envision-Elevate: From Initiatives to Systems Toolkit, currently on EngageNY (<https://www.engageny.org/resource/engage-envision-elevate-initiatives-systems>). This new toolkit will include profiles of adaptable career ladder pathways models, resources, and best practices to help address the five common talent management challenges that contribute significantly to equitable access:
  1. Preparation;
  2. Hiring and recruitment;
  3. Professional development and growth;
  4. Selective retention; and
  5. Extending the reach of top talent to the most high-need students

A section of the toolkit includes resources that will help LEAs implement the Department's recommended framework and steps to design and implement robust career ladder pathways:

1. Conduct a needs gap analysis;
2. Create design principles;
3. Develop communication and engagement strategies;
4. Provide on-going training and support;
5. Improve funding and sustainability; and
6. Continuously evaluate the program  
(<https://www.engageny.org/new-york-state-career-ladder-pathways-toolkit>).

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board of Regents continue to support the statewide expansion of career ladder pathways based on this proposed framework and recommendations from stakeholders and the Department. It is further recommended that the Board of Regents continue to support legislative funding requests for future rounds of the STLE program and career ladder pathways. This will help to ensure our educators and LEAs have the guidance and support necessary for the development and enhancement of comprehensive talent management systems, while supporting the strategies outlined in the State's equity plan.