



"Bringing the Common Core to Life"
David Coleman - Founder, Student Achievement Partners
Chancellors Hall - State Education Building - Albany, NY
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Part 1

Introduction by Commissioner Steiner:

Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you. It's a special moment this afternoon, so I'm going to ask everyone to take their seats. Thank you so much.

If you had said five years ago that 44 states in this country were going to come together and endorse a set of standards in their two critical core subjects of English Language Arts and mathematics, you could have had very, very long odds against that assumption. This country after all has a long history of very local educational initiatives. There are some proud parts of that history but there are also deep challenges of inequality of opportunity between different students exposed to radically unequal opportunities when it comes to the material they study and the quality of the teachers who are in front of them. No person in this country can claim to have done more to bring us to this moment than our guest who I'll introduce shortly.

But let me remind us all how this extraordinary enterprise of the common core standards fits into the vision of educational reform for the 3 million students of this state. We speak now of a triangle of educational reform work. One part of that triad are the standards-based curriculum that we will be working on with our guest today. The next part of that triad is a radically new set of models of assessments. We need to move past what we could call assessment 1.0, the multiple choice bubble test that you all know so well. I'd never seen one until I came to this country at the age of 22 when I was asked to fill out in the GRE exam A, B, C, or D and D was "cannot be ascertained by the information given." I just put D all the way through my math exam. I hadn't done math since I was 16. I was not a beneficiary of the common core. But I think the future looks bright. We are speaking of interim assessments that probe for deep understanding through course work that we are going to work on together in the next few years again with our guest. And then the third part of the triad, a really fair but rigorous accountability system for the first time for our teachers and our principals, enshrined in state law and shortly to be acted on by the Board of Regents. This triangle cannot work unless at the core of it are extraordinarily well-prepared teachers and principals, and that's why this state has made a major commitment to a radically different model of teacher preparation based on clinical practice and work on the skills that clearly make a difference for children. Five years from now, I hope that someone in this room can look back and say, "Who could have imagined that we put that triangle in place, that we have



moved the bar for our children in all of the directions that could have only been hoped for and dreamt of five years before.”

When the history of this period is written, I am convinced that David Coleman will be at the very center of the account of educational reform in this country. He has worked quietly through student achievement partners and earlier than that with the Grow Network, quietly but with extraordinary effectiveness as the architect and co-author of the standards he will describe today. It took an amazing act of courage and intellectual achievement to produce something that could be embraced by states across the country, states with proud individual histories--New York, Massachusetts--states that were still looking for their first real standards--north, south, east, and west. It was a pipe dream and now it's a reality. The critical importance of these standards is that for the first time everything else can be built around them. Without standards, we could not build coherent curriculum. Without standards, our assessments could not be compared properly across states. The assessments themselves lacked standards. Without standards, we cannot produce the kind of teacher preparation we need because we're not sure what we're preparing teachers to teach. With standards, we can for the first time do exactly that. Standards, in other words, are the backbone around which we will build the body of our education in the future. This is, therefore, a moment for all of us to look forward to the next steps.

After David has spoken, we will come back and describe just those steps--the network teams and the work in this state that will help all of you bring these standards to your schools and to your students. We know that this is a huge challenge. We know that teachers and principals, parents and students must be brought in as a partnership, as a community of learners, as we put these new standards in place. This is not a two-minute drill. What you're going to hear today is a first chapter, not the last; an inauguration, not an announcement and then a hiding. This Department is committed to working with you in the years to come as you translate these standards into what matters most, the things that are put in front of children in the classrooms across this state.

Without further ado, it is an extraordinary privilege for me to introduce a true colleague, a pioneer of education reform, David Coleman.