



News & Updates January 29, 2019

2019 FUSE Scholarships

Each year, the FUSE awards up to ten scholarships of \$1,000 each to the children of FUSE members who are graduating high school in that year.

Scholarship recipients are selected on the basis of demonstrated academic excellence, community service and participation in extra or co-curricular activities. Applications are reviewed by a committee of FUSE members in April, and recipients are notified in May.

Applications will be available from the FUSE office beginning February 4. Please call or email our office administrator Rose Colasuonno (914-636-7999 or rcolasuonno@nrfuse.com) to receive one.



Completed applications and supporting documentation (transcripts, letter of recommendation, essay) must be received in the FUSE office no later than April 26, 2018.

New Law Eliminates Mandated Use of 3-8 Tests in APPR

In what can best be described as a “good first step,” state lawmakers passed a bill last week that scraps the mandated use of state assessments in ELA and math in grades 3-8 when evaluating New York teachers. The legislation eliminating the requirement that these tests form a part of a district’s APPR plan removes the uncertainty of the “moratorium” that has been in place for the past few years by excluding the mandated use of these measures permanently.

Our state union’s advocacy for this legislation has been steadfast -- following the failure of the Senate to advance a similar law last year, NYSUT members around the state mobilized to replace lawmakers who stood in the way of this common sense reform. Their hard work paid off in the November elections when Democrats took control of the state senate, and opponents of APPR reform were defeated.



While legislation de-coupling teacher performance evaluations from the state tests is undoubtedly good news, many NYSUT locals (including FUSE), as well as some parent advocacy groups, do not believe the legislation goes far enough in returning full control of teacher and principal evaluations back to local school districts. The use of rubrics and the requirement that APPR plans include some kind of “student performance data” to be utilized for the performance axis of the APPR matrix remain unchanged. Additionally, the final legislation did not include any language to reduce the length of probationary period -- currently four years -- for non-tenured pedagogic staff.

The leadership of NYSUT has also repeatedly asserted that the recently passed legislation is a “big step forward,” but is only one aspect of its advocacy on testing reform. In the current legislative session, NYSUT will be working with lawmakers and the Board of Regents to pass legislation that corrects some of the serious deficiencies which still remain as a result of the “test and punish” mindset of the past few years:

- **The state tests are flawed and invalid.** They don’t provide meaningful or timely information to parents and educators. They continue to mislabel and harm students and their local schools.
- **The state’s ELA and math tests are too long.** Though the Board of Regents shortened the grade 3–8 tests from three days to two, there are still too many questions.



addition, too many questions require inference skills that are simply above students’ developmental level.

- **Computer-based testing is being rolled out too quickly.** After a data breach last year, NYSUT wrote a detailed letter to SED and the Board of Regents, calling on them to put the brakes on computer-based testing. NYSUT voiced concerns about a lack of infrastructure and poor Internet capability in some schools and questioned whether computer-based testing accurately measures student learning — or just how well students can maneuver around a keyboard. NYSUT continues to oppose computer-based testing for grades 3–5.

- **Benchmarks mislabel kids and are invalid.** SED has failed to adjust the troublesome proficiency benchmarks to reflect changes in the state tests. The state’s measuring stick for determining ‘proficiency’ remains badly flawed, with students and schools being mislabeled.

- **Untimed testing can be cruel and developmentally inappropriate.** Now that the tests are untimed, educators report excessively long periods of testing time for many students — even 8-year-olds who sat for five or six hours to finish their work.

- **In many instances, the tests are developmentally inappropriate.** Around the state, teachers report too many reading passages are above grade level, causing students great frustration. In

As a result, FUSE will continue to stand with other NYSUT locals and parent associations in supporting the “opt-out” movement until the legislature and the Board of Regents address these significant concerns regarding the 3-8 state assessments in ELA and math. More information about opt-out activism will be forthcoming in the next couple of months.

FUSE Delegates for NYSUT/AFT Conventions

Any member interested in serving as a delegate to the conventions of our state (NYSUT) and national (AFT) affiliates should contact Marty Daly at the FUSE office no later than February 15.

Delegates attend the annual NYSUT Representative Assembly (RA) each Spring and the bi-annual AFT convention every other summer. This year’s RA will be held on May 2 and 3 in Albany, the next AFT convention will be in July 2020.

In addition, delegates participate in bi-monthly regional NYSUT meetings and/or meeting of the Westchester Central Labor Council.

For more detailed information about the role and responsibilities of convention delegates, please call or email Marty at the FUSE office. (914-636-7999)

