

POLITICO New York Education

A free synopsis of our Pro morning email about New York education policy and politics

What to watch for on evaluations

By **ELIZA SHAPIRO**, **KESHIA CLUKEY** and **ARIMETA DIOP** | 09/25/2017 09:57 AM EDT

FOUR THINGS TO WATCH ON TEACHER EVALS — POLITICO New York's Keshia

Clukey: The state Board of Regents and state Education Department have a daunting task ahead of them as they look to review and revise controversial evaluations for principals and teachers. The issue will likely become heated both in the education and political arena, with the use of students' state tests scores at the core of the debate. "Using tests as an evaluative tool in any but the most general ways is going to continue to generate, I think, serious resistance and concern," said Gerald Benjamin, a professor of political science at SUNY New Paltz. New York State United Teachers, the state's largest teachers' union, already has called for the repeal of 2015 legislation, championed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo, which required schools to put in place a new evaluation system largely reliant on students' test scores. Opponents have argued that state test scores are not a good measure of teacher performance given the variables that are out of their control, with, for example, students coming from different living environments and learning at different rates. Other groups say change is needed, but argue that test scores should still be included.

The Regents and Education Department starting this fall will begin finding the middle ground as they continue to review and revise Common Core-era reforms — having just approved state learning standards. Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa recently told POLITICO New York that the board will likely extend its moratorium on the use of scores on third-through eighth-grade math and English language arts in teacher evaluations. The moratorium currently runs through the 2019-20 school year, but more time may be needed, Rosa said. The current timeline otherwise puts lawmakers under the gun to make changes

this upcoming legislative session. While stakeholders have very different thoughts on what should be included in the evaluation, most agree that the process shouldn't be rushed. "We should think about two goals: First, the teacher evaluation system must make the needs of students paramount — since a child's entire trajectory can change based on whether she's assigned to effective or ineffective teachers," said Education Trust-New York executive director Ian Rosenblum. "Second, there has to be enough confidence in the system by those who are being evaluated and by the public that it has credibility." Read more here.

GOOD MONDAY MORNING. **Carmen Fariña** will deliver an address at the NY State School Board Association leadership summit and then attend a receivership meeting in Queens. **Betty Rosa** and **MaryEllen Elia** did not release public schedules.

This newsletter is for you, so tell us how we can make it better. Send feedback, tips and education-related events to eshapiro@politico.com and kclukey@politico.com. Follow us on Twitter: [@elizashapiro](https://twitter.com/elizashapiro) and [@keshiaclukey](https://twitter.com/keshiaclukey).

SPOTLIGHT ON THE UFT'S MATERNITY LEAVE POLICY: Later today, New York City schoolteacher Emily James will attend the United Federation of Teachers' executive board meeting deliver a petition with around 78,000 signatures calling on the union to implement a maternity leave policy. NY1 reporter Lindsey Christ laid out the current policy in a series of tweets: "Policies that assume only women should care for infants are inherently sexist, negatively impacting working women (and parenting fathers!) ... And here is city and @UFT policy: Only women who physically give birth are even allowed to use their own sick days. And only for six weeks ... Female, straight teachers with no fertility issues try to plan pregnancies so children are born in the summer. Everyone else is out of luck." Even the Department of Education's own LGBT community liaison, Jared Fox, criticized the policy on Twitter, writing, "This very much affects same sex couples. I encourage LGBT UFT members to join this effort." See the Change.org petition here.

DOE PRINCIPAL FAILS UP — New York Post's Susan Edelman: "A Brooklyn principal accused of bringing grade-fixing to new heights has resigned, but was given another six-figure job, city officials said. Marc Williams, after less than two years as principal of the Secondary School for Journalism in Park Slope, quit amid an investigation of course-credit schemes exposed by The Post in July. A teacher said Williams turned a blind eye when a student got a passing grade in a course by taking online tests — with help from a classmate. Williams has been made a 'case manager' in the Department of Education's human resources department, officials said. His new \$127,443 salary is less than the \$156,131 he made last school year, but 'it was not a demotion,' said DOE spokesman Michael Aciman. As DOE investigators grilled teachers about the credit schemes, the 236-student school was

thrown into more turmoil this month.” Read more here.

EVA MOSKOWITZ EXPLAINS THE MEDIA — Excerpted from an interview with the Atlantic’s Alia Wong:

“Controversy sells. I don’t know if the fact that all of our second-graders are playing Monopoly for 90 minutes on a Wednesday laughing and sometimes arguing about the rules (there’s a lot of arguing that goes on among children when they’re playing games) [would sell]. ... Talking about loving children and schools and warmth? I don’t know if that sells newspapers... Not only is this image for us an out-of-body experience — because we honestly don’t know what folks [in the media] are talking about— but ... we are also the height of silliness and humor.” Read more here.

QUOTE OF THE DAY: “No one knows the costs of education battles better than Moskowitz; perhaps no one has had a record of educational and managerial achievement so clouded by politics. Resisting transparency, though, seems more likely to provide aid and comfort to Matt Damon and the unions for whom she is public enemy number one.” — David Cantor responds to news that Success is shielded from FOIL laws in The 74. Read more here.

HILLARY ON PRE-K: During a WNYC interview on Friday morning, Hillary Clinton said Mayor Bill de Blasio’s “work on universal pre-K was especially important to me.” In 2015, before Clinton launched her campaign, she visited a pre-K center in Brownsville with the mayor. Read more here.

OP-ED OF THE DAY: “Ending DACA isn’t a policy decision. Ending DACA is a notice to students, teachers and parents to put their dreams on hold. ...Instead of playing political games with students’ lives, our leaders in Washington should come to our schools and see the impact their decision is having.” — Angelica Infante-Green, deputy commissioner for the New York State Education Department, and Susana Cordova, deputy superintendent of Denver public schools, in The Hill. Read more here.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM IN COHOES — Times Union’s Bethany Bump: “Last year, nearly a quarter of all students in Cohoes missed at least 18 days of school. That’s two days a month, or 10 percent of all days in a school year. It’s also a telltale sign of chronic absenteeism, a hidden epidemic that studies show affects students far beyond their school career. Students who are chronically absent — meaning they miss at least 15 days of school a year — are not only at serious risk of falling behind in school, data shows, but are more likely to drop out of high school altogether, experience poverty, suffer health problems or end up in the criminal justice system. ...This year, for the first time, the district made busing available to students in the middle and high schools in hopes of getting more kids to

classes each day. Students in grades 6 through 12 are able to ride a CDTA bus to school for free, thanks to a new partnership between the district and the regional transportation authority. ...The new busing option is just one initiative, among several, the district has adopted in recent years to boost attendance and seat time for its nearly 1,900 students.”
Read more here.

AROUND NEW YORK:

— **“Two transgender high school students were told to get off a South Glens Falls school bus [last week] after they say the driver became upset because they wanted to sit on the side of the bus with the boys.”** — Post Star’s Michael Goot. Read more here.

— **“Violeta Gomez-Uribe, 32, goes to kickboxing classes in Brooklyn. Eduardo Garcia, 22, lifts weights at the gym, in between classes and two jobs.** Apolinar Islas, 34, who came to New York from Mexico when he was 15, said he walks around in ‘zombie mode’ and tries to stay off social media to avoid ‘the tsunami of confusion.’ All of them are recipients of DACA, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals...” — The New York Times’ Liz Robbins. Read more here.

— **Teaching assistants at the University at Buffalo are banding together** to push for increased stipends and lower fees for graduate students. — Buffalo News’ Jay Tokasz. Read more here.