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**New Public Affairs TV series exploring critical issues in New York State
begins with education discussions with NYS Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia**

“Connect:NY,” a new public affairs TV series, explores issues of critical importance in New York State. Susan Arbetter, host of “The Capitol Pressroom” serves as host on the show, and moderates one-hour panel discussions of the issues. The series begins with discussions on education topics with NYS Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia who will be joined by education experts from around the state.

The new program is produced by WCNY Public Media in Syracuse, NY, and will be available in local communities through PBS affiliates across the state. It will be carried by [insert station station information here]

“My priority is making sure that we give every student in New York the best chance to succeed,” said Commissioner MaryEllen Elia. “That’s why my first order of business as Commissioner has been to travel the state, listening to parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, and school board members. ‘Connect: NY’ will allow us to reach out to even more people and facilitates a thoughtful discussion of the issues that impact students the most.”

Upcoming episodes feature receivership, testing, opting-out, parental engagement, teacher evaluations, teacher retention, teacher development, school financing and equity, and the achievement gap.

“There are few issues that are of greater importance than the education of our children,” said Robert J. Daino, President and CEO of WCNY Public Media. “We’re proud that public broadcasting is the convener for these important conversations among New York State’s education leaders, parents, and other stakeholders as we work together to develop the best in educational services for our most important asset – our children.”

*The program features the following upcoming topics:*

**[insert station air date and time, channel information here.] |** **Receivership: how to deal with persistently struggling schools** Under the new state receivership plan, schools labeled “persistently struggling” will be given one year to improve student performance. Hear from Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, superintendents responsible for turning schools around, and stakeholders who think the plan could set up schools for further failure, and others who think receivership is the only option to save struggling schools. The show features Cheryl Atkinson, assistant state education department commissioner, Sam Radford, president of district parent coordinating council of Buffalo, Marguerite Vanden Wyngaard, Ph.D. Albany City Schools superintendent, Tim Kremer, New York State School Boards Association executive director, and Kevin Ahern, Syracuse Teachers Asociation president.

**[insert air date/time if known] |** **Testing, opting-out, parental engagement**

The movement among parents to refuse to allow their children to take Common Core-aligned standardized tests has been growing in New York. State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia responds to parents and other stakeholders who feel the tests have become too long and/or too difficult. Meet parents who are frustrated by their inability to help their children with Common Core aligned homework.

**[insert air date/time if known] | Teacher evaluations, teacher retention, teacher development**

Gov. Cuomo and the legislature instituted a new teacher evaluation system last session which places more emphasis on students' state test scores. Teachers, principals and superintendents have described the new evaluation matrix with words like “ineffective” and “unfair”. State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia addresses the concerns of stakeholders, and discusses the Governor’s decision to link state aid to adoption of new evaluations.

**[insert air date/time if known] | School financing & equity**

In 2006, the Court of Appeals ruled in Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York that the state had not met its constitutional obligation to provide adequate school funding to students in New York City. In 2007, the legislature remedied the issue by instituting a new, more generous funding formula. But the recession put a hold on that flow of funds. Now a second lawsuit is wending its way through the legal system to address what the plaintiff’s call the legislature’s constitutional failure. State Education Commissioner Mary Ellen Elia and school finance experts from around the state discuss both the financial and political considerations of the current state aid formula; how it could be changed; and the underlying reasons for the system’s inherent inequity.

**[insert air date/time if known] | Achievement Gap**

There is an acknowledged gap in achievement in standardized-test scores, course selection, grades, dropout rates, and college-completion rates among African-American and Hispanic students and their white peers. The key drivers of the gap are poverty and segregation. State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia joins a diverse panel of educators and activists to discuss how New York can close the gap.

“Connect: NY” will be broadcast on public television stations across New York State. It will also be available for streaming online at wcny.org/connectny.

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