Educational Policy: Instruction and Assessment

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Abstract

A challenging educational issue, which has in recent times been overlooked in the educational community, is what should be the relationship between instruction in the classroom and assessment at the end of the school year. Specifically, the educational issue concerns special education students in general education classrooms. Researchers within the field of education have come to understand the most beneficial method to ensure student progress at the high school level is for there to be a parallelism between instruction in the classroom and assessment at the end of the year. This paper presents an argument criticizing the existence of non-alignment between instruction in the classroom for the high school science curriculum and end of the year assessment. This research critique of educational policy provides new incite to how non-alignment is present between instruction and assessment, but it is possible for changes to be made to the educational policy.

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The purpose of the persuasive research paper is to call attention to an educational issue concerning the lack of existence of alignment between instruction in the classroom and assessment at the end of the school year in public high school classrooms, specifically concerning instruction and assessment for science. Additionally, an objective of the research is to provide incite for how alignment can be improved between instruction and assessment in New York State. Although the intention of alignment exists, or the idea that alignment does in fact exist, the issue of alignment not being present with regards to instruction and assessment for science still needs to be addressed during the present time.

Alignment in the context of the persuasive research paper relating to the educational system of instruction and assessment is defined as all components making up the system to come together and relate to one another. The components of instruction and assessment need to be coordinated as to establish a system which strives to reach a single, common goal. The goal is for students to become educated and to attain high levels of performance on end of the year assessments (La Marca, Redfield, Winter, Bailey, & Hansche, 2000). "Ultimately, alignment refers to how well all elements in a system work together to guide instruction and student learning" (Webb, 1997, p. 4).

The No Child Left Behind Act calls for all students to be able to progress on to the next grade level by achieving satisfactory grades on state assessments, but students cannot move forward in their school career if they fail to meet up to the necessary standards for state assessments. The current educational policy for instruction and assessment is not meeting the goals of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002, especially for special education students in general education high school science classrooms. Additionally, federal legislation has existed since 1994 that mandates states to assess students based on alignment of standards, but states, such as New York are failing to meet up to the goals of the U.S. Department of Education (Rothman, 2003).

Alignment in classrooms is pertinent to both teachers and students. There is persuasive evidence that students benefit when alignment exists between instruction in the classrooms throughout the year and assessment at the end of the year. There are a magnitude of students, specifically the students with special needs that are learning in inclusive classrooms, who are being negatively affected by the existence of non-alignment between instruction and assessment. However, general education students as well will be impacted negatively by receiving instruction that lacks parallelism with end of the year assessment. The goal of teachers is to help their students to have the opportunity to perform well on assessments based on practice throughout the school year, which should go hand in hand with assessment. When instruction and assessment do not share a relationship then we find that students fail to meet up to expectations for certain passing grades on end of the year state assessments.

The significance of the research is to address the educational issue of there being a lack of alignment between instruction and assessment relating to the subject of science, specifically earth science, living environment, and chemistry. Earth science is a subject that is taught to students in New York State, and the methods by which students are assessed does not match up to how they are instructed throughout the school year, with regards to laboratory practice. Additionally, for the subjects of living environment and chemistry the method of evaluation with regards to the students' knowledge of laboratory concepts is not aligned with how they are taught about such concepts throughout the school year in their laboratory classrooms. It is pertinent for it to be made known that if students are expected to perform well on regents examinations given to them after completion of a course then states, specifically New York, should be obligated to ensure that instruction and assessments align with one another. Policy makers must be made aware that the current methods for instruction and assessment for the subjects of earth science, living environment, and chemistry do not align with each other. The U.S. Department of Education has intended for students to not only have the opportunity to be promoted to the next grade level, but to be able to have the ability to move on to the next grade level in high school.

The research paper provides valuable information demonstrating how the current educational policy for instruction and assessment in New York State fails to meet the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act, and other objectives mandated by the U.S. Department of Education. Examples illustrating the lack of presence of alignment in New York State's public high schools concerning the subjects of earth science, living environment, and chemistry will be shared in the paper. Additionally, methods of instruction and assessment that are aligned in other states will be discussed, and how such methods are beneficial to teachers and students. Additionally, such methods will demonstrate how the proper alignment of instruction implemented by state standards and then end of the year assessment fulfills the overall objectives of the U.S. Department of Education concerning how all students are required to have the opportunity to be able to leave their current grade level and then move on to the next step in their education career. Suggestions will be given with the goal of providing means to ensure the presence of alignment in New York State's public high schools, and how students will only benefit from an improvement in the current educational policy.

It is imperative that policy makers understand that alignment between instruction and assessment needs to exist for students to even have a chance at passing their New York State Regents

Examinations. If the state standards call for students to learn throughout the year certain material in a specific way, and then such a method is not utilized on their examinations the students will have a much lower chance of performing well on the test. It must be known that an educational policy which includes a lack of alignment for instruction and assessment only hinders the performance of students, and will provide false information with regards to students meeting standards. If students are not being taught in a way similar to how they are assessed then results may illustrate an incorrect picture for what students know concerning the content matter (Rothman, 2003).

The hypothesis is that when instruction and assessment are aligned with one another, specifically in New York State, then overall students will perform better on their Regents examinations. For example, if students taking earth science at the end of the course are taught throughout the year by their teachers to work together in groups for laboratory practice then they will perform better on the Regents examination if they are allowed to work in groups for the laboratory practical component of the Regents examination. Additionally, if an English Language Learner (ELL) student is instructed in the laboratory setting in the English language and his laboratory assignments are given to him in English, but his end of the year regents examination is provided to him/her in another language then anti-parallelism exists between instruction and assessment. The student would have a more significant chance of scoring higher on the Regents examination if he/she was provided with an opportunity to learn certain subject material in his/her native language and then tested at the end of the year in his/her native language as well. Students should be instructed in the same way that they are assessed on their end of the year examination.

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Instruction in public high school classrooms in the state of New York fails to align with mandated end of the year assessments. There is no argument against curriculum being designed to allow students to be able to take an end of the year assessment relating to the knowledge that they have acquired from participating in a high school science course. The instruction provided to students with regards to content being learned does match up to state mandated end of the year assessments, but the problem that arises is how the act of instructing does not align with end of the year assessments. An example of instruction not being parallel to final assessments at the end of the year is students being taught to work in groups in a laboratory setting to complete experiments. The science Regents examination for New York State, specifically for the subject of earth science, does not permit the students to work together in groups to take their laboratory practical. Throughout the year, students work together in small groups to compete laboratory experiments. They learn about what is involved in completing such experiments, but then when they are tested on their knowledge with regards to earth science laboratory concepts they are expected to take an exam without any assistance from their peers.

Another defined example of the anti-parallelism that exists between instruction and end of the year assessment is how students are taught and then tested on their knowledge of living environment concepts. Students are taught during the school year how to work together to conduct experiments and certain laboratory practices concerning the subject of living environment. In comparison with the earth science regents, although there is no practical for the subject of living environment, the students are still tested on their final assessment as individuals

or alone. Students are expected to become familiar with certain concepts that will be tested at the end of the year, but if students are taught specific concepts in small groups there is reason to believe that those same students understand such concepts and remember the concepts better if they are assessed in the same way that they have been instructed throughout the year.

The method of instruction and assessment for the subject of chemistry is the same as the method of instruction and assessment for the subject of living environment. Students are taught by their teachers in small groups which allows them to work together to conduct experiments, and to then answer questions based on their knowledge of chemistry laboratory concepts. Students again are familiar with working in groups to learn about chemistry laboratory concepts, but then at the end of school year in June the chemistry Regents examination calls upon students to take the regents examination by themselves, working independently on the exam.

The end of the year assessments, specifically the regents examinations for science, expect students to have the ability to work alone to answer questions relating to the laboratory component of their courses. Earth science students are expected to take a laboratory practical alone, which involves them being assessed on previously learned laboratory concepts that were taught to them while they worked together in small groups in their laboratory classroom. Although towards the end of the school term students are provided with the opportunity to test their knowledge of laboratory concepts alone, it is not reasonable to consider it to be adequate enough practice to master such concepts.

Students are not permitted to take the regents examination for living environment and chemistry in groups, which once again illustrates how the final assessment for students does not align with instruction. Students are expected to work independently on the end of the year assessments and recall knowledge that was taught to them while working in small groups in the living environment or chemistry laboratory classroom. Concepts taught are tested on the final assessment at the end of the year, but the concepts are not being tested in the same manner of which they were taught to students.

Another example of evidence of non-alignment between instruction and assessment pertaining to how students are taught in the laboratory setting and then assessed at the end of the year concerns ELL students. An ELL student is taught scientific concepts pertaining to the laboratory component of a science course in the English language, but then he/she is provided with the opportunity to take the earth science regents practical, or another science regents examination in his/her native language. A student is learning concepts in a foreign language, but then is expected to have the ability to recall such knowledge, but in his/her own language. Instruction and assessment in two different languages illustrates clear evidence of how teaching and then how a student is being tested on content matter is not aligned in the public school system.

The observation can be made based on review of instruction and assessment in public high schools that instruction and assessment are not parallel with one another. The public school system fails to properly align the method by which concepts are taught to students with the method by which students are assessed on such concepts. Researchers believe that non-alignment is present within the public school system, and at the present time students may have the opportunity to learn, but they cannot truly demonstrate what they have achieved due to such

an issue. Students, as a result, may perform very well in the classroom and appear to be progressing with the amount of knowledge being attained, but if students are not being assessed in a manner that is familiar to them then assessment will not illustrate their true knowledge (Martone & Sireci, 2009). For example, students may appear to be performing laboratory procedures well, and seem to have a significant understanding of scientific concepts as they work together in groups, but then when they are tested at the end of the year individually, results may show a different conclusion. Evidence suggests that students did not learn the material efficiently, but there is reason to believe that if the students are assessed in the same manner that they are taught then results will be more positive.

According to Roach, Niebling, and Kurz (2008), instructional programs, state-content standards, and assessments are implemented with the goal of measuring student achievement, but are failing to make such an accomplishment in the public school system. Evidence illustrates how instead of measuring student achievement efficiently and accurately; instructional programs, state-content standards, and assessments are in actuality contradicting one another. The goal of measuring student achievement efficiently and accurately is not being met, and in contrast to the goal the results are heightening the stress levels of both teachers and students. There exists a lack of coordination between curriculum, instruction, and assessment, in high schools around New York State, which illustrates the major concern being addressed with regards to how instruction and assessment are not being aligned in the schools.

The non-alignment between instruction and assessment is not a new issue, although it may be a new issue being bought to the attention of the New York State public school system. There is specific evidence from other states that suggests that non-alignment between instruction and assessment has been a significant issue for quite some time, and it has yet to be officially addressed nation-wide, although some school districts have addressed the issue.

Studies have been conducted concerning alignment for a number of years leading up to the present time. The issue of alignment between instruction and assessment exists within the New York State public school system, specifically being addressed is the issue of alignment at the high school level. The alignment of science and mathematics state standards, instruction, and assessment has been measured in a study conducted in four different states during the nineties during a four day institute conducted review. It was even during that time that reviewers discovered that alignment is not equal in all states, and that alignment is not always present between instruction and assessment. If state standards and instruction do not align with one another then the conclusion can also be made addressing how as a result instruction and assessment are not in alignment with one another as well (Webb, 1999).

The non-parallelism between instruction and assessment is a major issue and concern in New York State, and as an observer in the public school system, specifically at a New York City public high school level, evidence of non-alignment is present. There is evidence illustrating how students in an earth science laboratory classroom are taught the laboratory component of the earth science course working in small groups. The students are expected to take on different roles in their groups and to work together to conduct experiments and to attain knowledge pertaining to the earth science curriculum. The end of the year assessment demonstrates instruction and assessment not being parallel with one another since students take an earth

science practical testing their knowledge of earth science concepts in a laboratory setting working alone. Students are not permitted to work together in groups in contrast to how they first learned the subject matter in the laboratory classroom during their laboratory periods throughout the year.

Another distinct piece of evidence showing non-alignment between instruction and assessment is concerning how students are taught on a day to day basis in a science classroom. Special education students are instructed in a different matter than general education students, but at the end of the school year take the same regents examination as everyone else in the school and state-wide. For example, special education students are instructed by special education teachers in a smaller environment outside of the classroom, where the special education teacher has the ability to tailor lessons to the needs of his/her students. The teacher then is provided with the opportunity to teach the students in a quieter environment where they are isolated from outside influence, such as the noise that comes with being a part of a large classroom with a significant number of students.

During the school year the special education students are able to learn in a peaceful environment without any outside distractions. The non-alignment between instruction and assessment becomes apparent when during regents exams the same students who throughout the year were instructed in a quiet environment are now placed into an environment that differs substantially from their previous learning environment. While taking their regents examinations, since the special education students receive extended time for state and city-wide exams, they are placed into either the library or the cafeteria. The students are not the only students utilizing these facilities, especially in schools that share a building with other schools. During the regents examinations special education students are surrounded by students from other schools who utilize the same learning space. The sharing of learning space creates an extremely different environment than the environment that the students had become accustomed to during the school year when they were instructed by their special education teachers. Special education students are expected to perform well on regents exams, although the classroom environment has been drastically altered from how they were instructed throughout the school year prior to the administering of the regents examinations. Special education students are taught by their teachers in one type of environment, but then at the end of the school year are assessed in a dramatically different environment.

There is another imperative observation proving the existence of the non-alignment of instruction and assessment in a New York City public high school. A student in a tenth grade chemistry class spoke Russian as his first language, but was taught in English, which would have been expected in a New York City high school. The student was ELL and at the end of the year for his chemistry Regents examination he was assessed in his native language, which was Russian. If the student is instructed in chemistry in the English language without a Russian translation then non-alignment exists since then at the end of the year for his final assessment he must take his regents examination in Russian. He was taught in one language, but then was assessed in another language.

There are a significant number of views and opinions relating to the topic of non-alignment between instruction and assessment in the public school system. Researchers are in agreement

that non-alignment between instruction and assessment exists and that it negatively impacts the public school system nation-wide. According to La Marca, Redfield, Winter, and Despriet (2000) alignment between instruction and assessment is imperative because it helps to guide the public school system as a whole towards improving student learning, and ensuring that students are being assessed accurately and in an efficient manner. If non-alignment exists between instruction and assessment then the measure of the performance of students on state-wide exams in not an accurate interpretation as to whether students have gained certain skills. Since non-alignment exists it is unfair to make the conclusion that students are deficient in certain areas relating to subject-specific content. Therefore, it is not an accurate measurement of whether students have met expectations that have been set up by state-wide school districts, which demonstrates student knowledge and skills.

Another researcher, Webb (1997) believes that the non-alignment of instruction and assessment, which begins at a state-wide level eventually leads to major complications and difficulties at the nation-wide level. For example, if non-alignment exists between instruction and assessment in a large number of states, then there will be failure on behalf of these states to obtain the goal set up by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Students meeting standards is a key performance indicator for states, districts, and schools, and if non-alignment is present between instruction and assessment then the results of state-wide assessments is not an effective measure of student performance levels state-wide.

According to Roach et al. (2008) non-alignment between instruction and assessment becomes a major issue for the success of special education students in public schools on a state-wide level. The existence of non-alignment between instruction and assessment significantly affects special education students since the end of the year assessment does not accurately portray the skills and knowledge gained by the students throughout the school year. Special education students are taught using specific methods throughout the year and perform well in their classes, but then when it comes to the end of the year assessment the students fail the exams. It appears that the students have not reached the benchmarks provided by the state as well as by NCLB, but when in reality the student's progress was not fairly measured on the assessment. Students have accommodations and modifications made to their instruction, but then for the assessment that they must take at the end of the year no such accommodations or modifications are put into place. (Roach & Elliot, 2006) It would appear that students have failed to obtain the necessary skills and content knowledge to move onto the next grade level, but in reality their failure on the assessment is due to there being the existence of anti-parallelism between instruction and assessment.

According to Roach et. al. (2008) the non-alignment between instruction and assessment results in overall lower grades on assessments for students. The lower grades on assessments shows that students have not met state-defined criteria for assessment, but that is not an accurate conclusion to be formulated since non-alignment between instruction and assessments is one of the major reasons for such low assessment grades. Low assessment scores in addition to being an inaccurate portrayal of performance for obtaining state-wide goals is also an inaccurate measure of whether school-wide districts are meeting federal standards for education. If students are being taught by a different means than they are assessed at the end of the year, how can a valid conclusion be formed as to whether students have actually be able to learn required subject-

content and apply certain skills? Student achievement cannot be accurately measured as long as non-alignment between instruction and assessment exists within school districts. (Anderson, 2002)

Since it is apparent that non-alignment between instruction and assessment has become a nation-wide issue it is pertinent that alignment research exists throughout the United States. Martone (2007) has concluded that alignment studies can be valuable professional development activities for teachers and curriculum developers. By evaluating test items and their congruence to state-defined benchmarks, participants in alignment studies are forced to become intimately familiar with state standards and the assessments. This increased familiarity could have positive effects on instruction. By participating in an alignment study, teachers can apply what they are learning through the alignment process in their classroom.

There are no current research studies assessing alignment between instruction and assessment in New York State, although studies have been conducted in other states. New York, although facing an old issue, is failing to address the issue that is presently facing New York Public schools. Observations have been assessing alignment by teachers, student teachers, administration, and even students but there is not any research at the present time that points out the specific types of non-alignment that exists, and how it is a detrimental issue facing New York State public schools. The non-alignment between instruction and assessment needs to be addressed by research studies, and the level of non-alignment cannot be accurately determined if some type of studies are conducted within the state in its public schools, specifically at the high school level.

There is no questioning that non-alignment does exist between instruction and assessment in the public school system. Non-alignment between instruction and assessment is not only detrimental to the students that it affects, but in addition it significantly impacts the success of the New York State public school system as a whole entity. As long as anti-parallelism is present between instruction and assessment students will continue to suffer from the consequences, especially special education students, and English Language Learners in the New York State school system. Students cannot be expected to pass state examinations and become successful at meeting goals set by NCLB when the fault lies within the system itself; the lack of alignment between instruction and assessment. There must be a correction in the faults within the system, which should work and strive to create a successful and efficient partnership between instruction and assessment. An improvement in students' assessment scores can only accurately be measured and utilized as a gauge to examine whether students are attaining goals and gaining subject-content knowledge and skills when there is an appropriate and adequate parallelism between instruction and assessment. The New York State public school system can only achieve such a pertinent goal by researching and conducting studies, which examine such a major issue, and developing a means by which to correct the flaws in the system. Non-alignment between instruction and assessment continues to be a detrimental force that for years to come will wreak havoc and hinder the success of students within the New York State public school system.

There is valid evidence that alignment between instruction and assessment creates positive results for school-districts, and leads to education departments within states reaching the goals of NCLB. Although, there have been no studies thus far measuring the level of alignment in New

York State public schools, there have been multiple studies conducted in other states. The degree of alignment between instruction and assessment varies among different states, but the studies illustrate how alignment is necessary for positive results in school systems state-wide, and eventually leads to positive results on a nation-wide scale. The success of alignment between instruction and assessment is necessary for students to reach specific benchmarks set up by school districts and then on a nation-wide level, and for results of assessments to accurately portray student levels of accomplishment, and obtaining certain skills and subject-content area knowledge. There is no arguing that alignment between instruction and assessment leads to students' statistics for passing assessments being valid, and then being used to direct future instruction in classrooms.

Positive results from alignment between instruction and assessment have been seen in various states across the nation. For example student grades on assessments have been higher when textbooks used for instruction in the classrooms shared similar content to the end of the year assessment. Special education students, especially, have benefited from textbooks utilized in the classroom being similar in content as well as the type of phrasing used in questions. When teachers have utilized workbooks or textbooks in the classroom created by companies that align their books to the actual regents examination students appear to perform better on end of the year assessments. Students are able to recognize commonalities between what they have learned the entire year, and how they have learned the content the entire year in relationship to the assessment that they take at the end of the school year. The tools that teachers use in their classrooms, such as textbooks for the students, play a powerful role in bringing positive results due to alignment of instruction and assessment (LaMarca et al., 2000).

Alignment has also been proven to have positive results when technology, materials, and tools in the classroom match up with the technology, materials, and tools students are allowed to use on the end of the year state assessments. For example, students have performed at a much higher level on state examinations when the technology, materials, and tools that they were used to using throughout the school year were the same as the technology, tools, and materials permitted for use on state assessments. When students have been working with calculators throughout the year in their classrooms they have performed better on state examinations when they were allowed to use a calculator to take their state examination. Students develop certain skills and a strong level of confidence as a result of being able to use the calculators to solve scientific problems, or even mathematical problems for that matter. When they are given their familiar technological device to use on the state examination that same level of confidence and the use of their skills that have been utilized throughout the school year enable them to perform better when taking their end of the year assessment. Another example besides a calculator being used throughout the year would be a computer. If a student takes computerized assessments all year long for their quizzes and/or examinations then if for the state assessment he or she is provided with the same opportunity then a positive result is the outcome due to alignment between instruction and assessment. Specifically, we are examining the relationship between technology, tools, and materials used by students all year long, and then what is provided to students on their state examinations for them to use while they are taking the examination (Webb, 1997).

Alignment between assessment and instruction provides positive results when what is expected of students throughout the year is the same as what is expected of students for their state

assessments. When students have set benchmarks to attain throughout the year that match the benchmarks that students are expected to meet for their end of the year assessment then alignment between instruction and assessment exists within the system with favorable results (1997).

When teachers, specifically special education teachers, align benchmarks for students with the benchmarks that are supposed to be attained by the end of the year for state standards alignment is successful. For example, for the subject of science, specifically earth science, if students are expected to know three different types of rocks, and how those three different types of rocks are formed then for the state assessment that same content is all the students should have to know to meet their benchmark with success. Positive results come into play when a satisfactory level of understanding for the student is the same level of understanding that students are expected to have for their state assessments. The problem only comes into play when throughout the year students are expected to attain a goal that at the end of the year for their assessment is not deemed satisfactory enough for the gaining of appropriate content knowledge. If a student knows the three different types of rocks and how they are formed, and on the state assessment the students are only expected to know that content about rocks and no more than that then we would see positive results. Any other knowledge that students have above that extent should be deemed beyond satisfactory, but students should not be held accountable for information tested of them on an examination when throughout the year they performed at a Level B, but are now expected to perform at a Level C. If a benchmark for a student is attained and throughout the year it has been deemed an acceptable goal then for the exam only attaining that benchmark and beyond would result in positive results.

In the state of Kansas positive results due to alignment have been evident when instruction and assessment work hand and hand together. For example, students throughout the year learn in collaborative team teaching classrooms where special education students and general education students learn together in the same classroom. When state assessments called for special education students to work together with general education students on their state examination scores were not hindered due to both groups of students working together. For a portion of the state assessment special education students and general education students have been required to work together to take the examination, which is similar to the way they work throughout the school year. When students had the opportunity to take the end of the year assessment in a familiar setting with regards to the same type of environment the scores of special education students did not decrease and the scores of general education students although not going up did not become affected negatively by those students working alongside special education students (Webb, 2006).

There are certain suggestions that need to be provided to help improve the lack of alignment between instruction and assessment in the state of New York. With regards to laboratory practices, such as earth science laboratory classes for students, changes must be made to help align instruction and assessment. If end of the year examinations, such as the earth science practical call for students to work alone then it is pertinent that throughout the year students are taught to work on lab assignments independently rather than work in a group. If students are expected to know how to perform certain skills by themselves then they must have the

opportunity throughout the year to gain such skills in the classroom by learning to use those skills while they work alone.

Another solution to laboratory assignments being taught differently to students all year than how they are expected to take the laboratory practical is to teach students at the beginning of the year in collaborative learning groups, but then towards the end of the school year slowly weaning them off relying on each other for laboratory exercises. When it comes time for teachers to review for the lab practical for earth science instruction should involve students working independently to work on certain skills that they are expected to know for the laboratory practical exam. The Department of Education needs to put aside collaborative learning for the end of the year and allow teachers to examine students' skills in a way that is similar to how their skills are examined for the laboratory practical examination. Independent learning as the Regents approaches in June in the only method by which instruction and assessment can relate to one another.

In contract to instructional practice needing to be changed we can also view the issue from an alternate perspective. If students are thought to learn best by working in groups then New York should use the Kansas state assessment model where examinations provide opportunities for students to work together in groups. No one is stating that students should have to take examinations as a group for an entire examination, but there should be a section allotted to them to work together with their peers as they have done throughout the year in their classrooms with their classmates. Group work throughout the year and group work on a state examination will lead to New York State leaning towards acknowledging how non-parallelism exists between instruction and assessment, and that efforts are being made to improve such a detrimental problem.

If students work alone all year long in their classrooms then they should be expected to work alone on their state assessments, but such is not the case in the state of New York with the Workshop Model being the main form of instruction that is expected of teachers to use in the classrooms. The Workshop Model pushes for students to work together in collaborative groups to help each other to learn, but at the end of the year the Workshop Model is not the format for students to take an examination. If a student become dependent on the aid of another student and that student is no longer there to offer them assistance when it comes to taking the end of the year assessment then there is no doubt scores will be lower for those students. The lack of alignment between instruction and assessment can only be fixed if the Workshop Model is incorporated into formal assessment at the end of the year or if the Workshop Model is no longer the desired method for instruction by teachers. The removal of the Workshop Model would be detrimental to students because peer review and collaboration amongst peers has been proven to be beneficial to students, and the only solution is to incorporate the ideal method for instruction into the end of the year assessment.

Public high schools at the present time are experiencing a lack of alignment between instruction and formative assessments given to students at the closing of the school year, specifically referring to Regents examinations. Since the Department of Education is aiming to soon do away with the regents examinations it is pertinent that the new state assessments takes into consideration the issue of non-alignment between curriculum and assessment. The issue of anti-

parallelism between instruction and assessment needs to be addressed at the present time and New York State should perform research studies investigating the lack of alignment that exists and how it is wreaking havoc on the New York State public school system. It is pertinent that New York State becomes a model for the public school systems in other states and strives to develop the most beneficial means by which to ensure all students whether they are special education students or general education students have the same opportunity to succeed in their academic career, which will lead to success later on in their lives.

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About the Author

Christina M. Sorrentino, M.S. Ed. is a professionally dual licensed general education and special education science teacher in the states of New York and New Jersey. She received her Bachelor of Science in Biology and Adolescent Education Grades 7-12 from the College of Staten Island Teacher Education Honors Academy, and then received her Masters of Science in Education with a concentration in Middle Childhood 5-8 Generalist Special Education from the College of Staten Island. She has taught chemistry, living environment, and earth science to special education students in both standalone and integrated co-teaching classrooms. Ms. Sorrentino was a special education liaison and participated in curriculum development for the New York City Department of Education at her former school. She has also helped to design and implement the S.T.E.M. curriculum for the Archdiocese of Newark at a Catholic school where she volunteered her time working with the Science Department. Her research interest is differentiation in the classroom and its effects on the performance of special education students on summative assessments.