

Participant Materials



NYS Portrait of a Graduate & Inquiry-Based Learning in PreK-Grade 5

Wednesday, January 14, 2026

9:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Eastern Suffolk BOCES

Instructional Support Center at Sequoya

750 Waverly Avenue, Holtsville



NYS Portrait of a Graduate & Inquiry-Based Learning in PreK-Grade 5

January 14, 2026
9:00AM-2:00PM
Designated BOCES or Big 5 Site

Agenda

- 9:00-9:15** **Opening Remarks**
Dr. Betty A. Rosa, Commissioner of Education
- 9:15-9:50** **What is the NYS Portrait of a Graduate?**
Dr. Santosha Oliver, Assistant Commissioner for Standards & Instruction
- 9:50-10:50** **Session 1**
The Portrait of a Graduate: Implications for Pre-K to Grade 5
- **Michael Burns**, Early Learning Principal, Questar III BOCES
 - **Lisa Mulhall**, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, Harrison CSD
 - **Dennis Kortright**, Principal, Harrison CSD
- 11:00-11:50** **Lunch Break**
- 11:50-12:50** **Keynote Speaker**
Stephen Ritz, Founder, Green Bronx Machine
- 12:50-1:50** **Session 2**
Operationalizing the Portrait of a Graduate through Inquiry-Based Learning
- **Nicole Bailey**, Instructional Coach, Buffalo Public Schools
 - **Dyanthe Spielberg**, Principal, NYC Public Schools
 - **Corinthia Mirasol-Spath**, Grade 4/5 Special Education Teacher, NYC Public Schools
- 1:50-2:00** **Closing Remarks**
Dr. Lester W. Young, Jr., Chancellor, New York State Board of Regents



Materials for Participants

Guiding Discussion Questions: What is the NYS Portrait of a Graduate?

Choose **1-2 attributes** from the list below to discuss.

Questions	Reflection/Notes
<p>Academically Prepared</p> <p>How will I design inquiry experiences that ensure every student can access, engage with, and make sense of grade-level content and academic language—and what formative checks will I use to monitor and respond to their understanding in real time?</p>	
<p>Creative Innovator</p> <p>How will I structure moments for students to reflect on their learning—what they attempted, what they discovered, and what they revised—and how will I use these reflections to deepen their capacity to generate and test new ideas?</p>	
<p>Critical Thinker</p> <p>How will I intentionally create opportunities for students to ask questions, analyze evidence, articulate their reasoning, and build on peers' ideas?</p>	

<p>Effective Communicator</p> <p>What routines and tools will I use to ensure all students regularly express their thinking through speaking, writing, drawing, modeling, or multimodal formats?</p>	
<p>Global Citizen</p> <p>What specific structures will I use to teach and model respectful listening, questioning, and discussion so students learn to communicate across differences and build empathy for others?</p>	
<p>Reflective and Future Focused</p> <p>How will I cultivate a classroom culture where students routinely reflect on their learning and set goals?</p>	

Materials for Participants (Cont.)

Guiding Discussion Questions: Session 1

The Portrait of a Graduate: Implications for Pre-K to Grade 5

Questions	Reflection/Notes
<p>Insights & Surprises</p> <p>What key insight or surprising idea stood out to you from today's session or presentations?</p>	
<p>Application to Your Context</p> <p>How might you apply this insight in your own work or school setting, and what is one thing you feel ready to begin doing now?</p>	
<p>Anticipated Challenges</p> <p>What challenges or concerns came to mind as you listened to the presentations and considered leading this work in your own setting?</p>	
<p>Supports & Opportunities</p> <p>What opportunities, strategies, or resources might help you address these challenges and successfully move this work forward?</p>	

Materials for Participants (Cont.)

Guiding Discussion Questions: Keynote Address

Stephen Ritz, Founder, Green Bronx Machine

Questions	Reflection/Notes
<p>Insights & Surprises</p> <p>What key insight or surprising idea stood out to you from today's session or presentations?</p>	
<p>Application to Your Context</p> <p>How might you apply this insight in your own work or school setting, and what is one thing you feel ready to begin doing now?</p>	
<p>Anticipated Challenges</p> <p>What challenges or concerns came to mind as you listened to the presentations and considered leading this work in your own setting?</p>	
<p>Supports & Opportunities</p> <p>What opportunities, strategies, or resources might help you address these challenges and successfully move this work forward?</p>	

Materials for Participants (Cont.)

Guiding Discussion Questions: Session 2

Operationalizing the Portrait of a Graduate through Inquiry-Based Learning

Questions	Reflection/Notes
<p>Insights & Surprises</p> <p>What key insight or surprising idea stood out to you from today's session or presentations?</p>	
<p>Application to Your Context</p> <p>How might you apply this insight in your own work or school setting, and what is one thing you feel ready to begin doing now?</p>	
<p>Anticipated Challenges</p> <p>What challenges or concerns came to mind as you listened to the presentations and considered leading this work in your own setting?</p>	
<p>Supports & Opportunities</p> <p>What opportunities, strategies, or resources might help you address these challenges and successfully move this work forward?</p>	

Materials for Participants (Cont.)

Speaker Biographies (in order of appearance)

Dr. Betty A. Rosa

Commissioner of Education & President of the University of the State of New York



Dr. Betty A. Rosa is the Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York. Dr. Rosa was appointed as permanent Commissioner on February 8, 2021, by the Board of Regents. She is the first Latina woman to serve in the position.

Previously, Dr. Rosa served as Interim Commissioner since August 2020. Prior to that, she served as Chancellor of the Board of Regents since 2016. Dr. Rosa was elected by her Board of Regents colleagues as Chancellor in March 2016 and re-elected for a second term in 2019. She was first elected to the Board of Regents for a five-year term in 2008, as the Regent for the Twelfth Judicial District (Bronx County), then re-elected for a second term in 2013 and a third term in 2018.

Dr. Rosa is a nationally recognized education leader and received an Ed. M. and Ed. D. in Administration, Planning and Social Policy from Harvard University. She also holds two other Master of Science in Education degrees, one in Administration and Supervision and the other in Bilingual Education from the City College of New York and Lehman College, respectively, and a B.A. in psychology from the City College of New York. She has more than 30 years of instructional and administrative experience with an expertise in inclusive education, cooperative teaching models, student achievement, and policy implementation.

Dr. Rosa began her career in the NYC Department of Education as a bilingual paraprofessional, teacher, and reading coordinator, served as an assistant principal and principal in special education, introduced an integrated linguistic model in developing a multilingual and multicultural school for general and special education populations, was principal of I.S. 218, a full-service community school in partnership with the Children's Aid Society in District 6, and developed and implemented the Office of Conflict Resolution for the NYC Division of Special Education. In 1998, Dr. Rosa was appointed to the position of Superintendent of Community School District 8 in the Bronx and later appointed to serve as the Senior Superintendent of the Bronx. One of the schools Dr. Rosa founded as superintendent, M.S. 101 (Maritime Academy for Science and Technology), became the

Materials for Participants (Cont.)

top ranked middle school in the City of New York based on New York State examination results. She has taught graduate level education courses including Education of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Children, Due Process: Law and the Handicapped, and Applied and Action Research for Doctoral Students, has served on dissertation committees, and is an executive coach for doctoral students.

Since 2015, Dr. Rosa has been honored with the Champions of Education Leadership Award from the Alliance for Quality Education, Woman of the Year Award from the New York League of Puerto Rican Women, Heimlich Community Service Award from the Ben Franklin Reform Democratic Club, Transformative Education Leadership Award from the International Chartership High School, Education Leadership Award from the National Puerto Rican Day Parade, Leadership in Education Award from the Association of Dominican-American Supervisors and Administrators, Women of Distinction Award from the Bronx Chamber of Commerce, and the Latina of the Year Award from the New York State Assembly and Senate’s Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force.

Michael Burns

Early Learning Principal, Questar III BOCES



Michael Burns is a dedicated educator with more than 25 years of experience across the full span of PreK–12 education. Currently serving as the Early Learning Principal at Questar III BOCES, Michael’s passion for teaching and leadership has taken him from the classroom to school and district administration, impacting students and educators in PreK, elementary, middle, and high school settings.

Throughout his career, Michael has been a strong advocate for innovative instructional practices, inclusive learning environments, and early childhood development. His leadership is grounded in a deep belief that every young learner deserves joyful, engaging, and equitable educational experiences. In addition to his work in schools and districts, Michael is also an

author. His children’s book, *Nervous Rex*, blends heartfelt storytelling with valuable lessons in social-emotional learning.

Today, Michael is honored to join this statewide event to share insights from his experiences and to collaborate with fellow educators working to shape the future of learning in New York State.

Materials for Participants (Cont.)

Lisa Mulhall

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, Harrison Central School District



Dr. Mulhall joined the leadership team of Harrison Central School District in July 2021. She previously served as the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction in the Oyster Bay-East Norwich Central School District for eleven years. In this role, Dr. Mulhall was responsible for all aspects of teaching and learning for the district's 1,600 K-12 students.

Dr. Mulhall taught English Language Arts in New Jersey for ten years, earning recognition as New Jersey's Independent School Teacher of the Year in 2001.

Dr. Mulhall earned a Bachelor's degree in English from Rutgers University. She also holds a Master's degree in English Education and a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership from Teachers College at Columbia University.

Dennis Kortright

Elementary School Principal, Harrison Central School District



Mr. Dennis Kortright has over 28 years of experience in education. Eighteen of those years he has served as an Elementary School Principal, Director of Mathematics, and Elementary Supervisor of Math and Science in the Harrison Central School District, Harrison, New York.

In his current role as Elementary Principal, Dennis has led his school to become a New York State school of recognition for two consecutive years. This was the result of analyzing data from multiple assessments, which led to a schoolwide campaign on academic language. The focus on academic language has provided all students with equity and access to high-level content.

Dennis earned a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from New York University and a Master's degree in Leadership in Mathematics Education from Bank Street College.

Materials for Participants (Cont.)

Stephen Ritz

Founder, Green Bronx Machine



[Stephen Ritz](#) is an internationally acclaimed, award-winning educator, author of best-selling book, [The Power Of A Plant](#) and Founder of [Green Bronx Machine](#). Known as the Child-Whisperer, America's favorite teacher, and [2015 Top Ten Finalist for the Global Teacher Prize](#), Stephen is responsible for creating the first edible classroom in the world. He and his students have grown more than 350,000 pounds of vegetables in the South Bronx, were celebrated at the Obama White House three times, have been featured on the cover of TIME for KIDS, and are the subject of a new, full-feature, award-winning documentary, [GENERATION GROWTH](#). Stephen serves as a Senior Fellow in Social Innovation at Babson College, a Senior Teaching Fellow for Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and as a Board Member for the NYC Nutrition Education Network. Stephen is

now appearing in the new educational television series, Let's, was named the [2020 Change-Maker Award by NYC Food Policy Center](#) and [CNN Food Hero](#) for his response to COVID, named a [2021 Food Hero by TMZ Live](#), testified for the [U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ending Hunger in America](#), and was awarded the [2021 Artemis CEA Disruptor Award](#) for his work, advocacy, and impact in public schools across NYC and America. Stephen was awarded 2022 and 2023 Best of Bronx and is a member of the Food Transition Team and the Urban Agriculture Advisory Board for NYC Mayor, Eric Adams.

Stephen was named 2023 Global Food Hero and celebrated by Anthem Awards for his non-profit leadership. [Green Bronx Machine was named by Fast Company as Most Innovative Company 2024](#). Recently honored as 2024 Food Waste Warrior by Food Tank, Stephen was invited to meet personally with USDA Secretary Tom Visac at the first-ever Agrifood Innovation Symposium: Cultivating Scientific Solutions that Nourish People & Planet to highlight the work and impact of Green Bronx Machine and was just awarded the [2025 Global Food Changemaker Prize](#) in Social Impact for his work promoting sustainable and healthy eating among vulnerable youth by KM Zero Food Innovation Hub and the General Director of the NGO Acción Contra el Hambre, Manuel Sánchez-Montero. Stephen's work has been featured globally in print and digital media and has amassed over 40M imprints. In partnership with PBS, Stephen debuted an educational series, [Let's Learn with Mister Ritz](#), to over 2M views and just launched an animated learning series, [Green Bronx Machine KIDS!](#), featuring a [free curriculum companion](#) for learners of all ages.

Materials for Participants (Cont.)

Janet Volk

Prekindergarten Teacher, P.S. 99: Stanley M. Makowski Early Childhood Center, Buffalo Public Schools

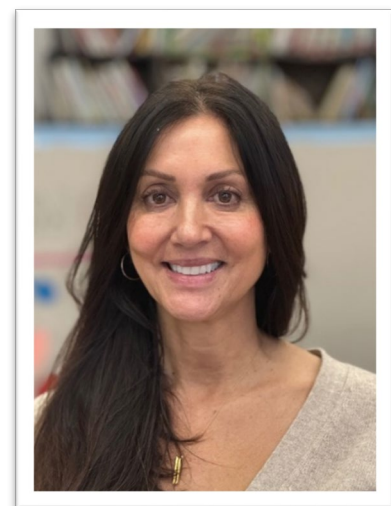


Janet has been an early childhood educator for 30 years and currently teaches prekindergarten at Public School 99, an International Baccalaureate school in Buffalo. She is committed to an inquiry-based approach that nurtures young children as compassionate, lifelong learners.

In the 2024–2025 school year, Janet participated in NYSED’s “Science Everywhere” pilot, beginning with the Bird Nests exploration and continuing to implement inquiry-based learning throughout the year. She brings her experience with the pilot to highlight how inquiry-based learning supports the growth and development of our youngest learners.

Dyanthe Spielberg

Principal, M363 The Neighborhood School, NYC Public Schools



Dyanthe Spielberg has over 25 years of experience in elementary education, having served as a teacher, literacy coach, curriculum developer, and administrator. For the past 13 years, she has been the principal of The Neighborhood School, a progressive public elementary school in New York City.

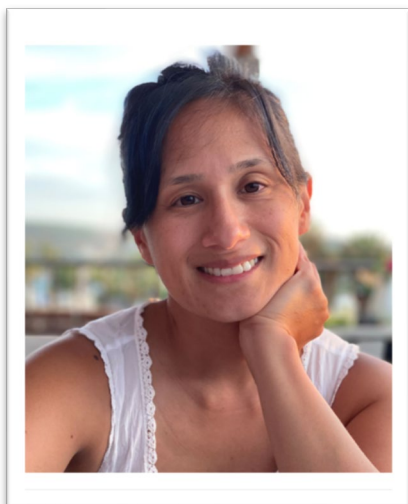
Since 2021, Dyanthe has worked with a group of progressive schools to develop 5th-grade Performance-Based Assessment Tasks (PBATs) for mathematics. This assessment model is designed to reflect a hands-on, project-based approach by having students design a playground. This project allows students to apply mathematical knowledge and skills to a real-world problem in an authentic, real-life context. She looks forward to discussing how PBATs can be used to provide a more complete picture of

what students truly know and can do.

Materials for Participants (Cont.)

Corinthia Mirasol-Spath

4/5 Special Education Teacher, M363 The Neighborhood School, NYC Public Schools



Corinthia has had a total of 19 years of experience in the classroom as a 4th/5th grade teacher in NYC. She is dual certified as a General Education Teacher (Grades 1-6) and Teaching Students with dis/Abilities (Grades 1-6). She currently works as a special education teacher at The Neighborhood School in the Lower East Side in an Integrated Co-Teaching classroom.

In 2021, Corinthia joined a group of progressive schools to create a Math Performance Based Assessment, which was launched in May 2022. Together they wanted to create a way to showcase student understanding. This work lends itself well to Corinthia’s interests in the role of play in the classroom through Project Time and its potential to create a space and time in the classroom to enable us to realize and build our capacities as learners, workers, and people.

Dr. Lester W. Young, Jr.

Chancellor, New York State Board of Regents



Lester W. Young, Jr. has made creating opportunities “where every student can be successful” the guiding principle of his more than 50 years of public service. Dr. Young currently serves as Chancellor, Board of Regents, University of the State of New York. His unanimous election on January 11, 2021, made him the first African American Chancellor in the 237-year history of the Board of Regents.

He began his career with the New York City (NYC) Department of Education, holding positions as a Teacher, Guidance Counselor, Supervisor of Special Education and Principal. During his tenure as Principal, PS 183 Brooklyn (Ocean-Hill Brownsville) was recognized as a School of Excellence by the United States Department of Education (USDOE) and the New York State

Education Department (NYSED).

Materials for Participants (Cont.)

Dr. Young also served as Assistant and Associate Commissioner with the NYSED (1988- 1993) and led the department's efforts in New York City (NYC). Dr. Young's portfolio included state-wide leadership responsibility for the Offices of School Improvement, Community Schools, Bilingual Education, and Migrant Services and Education.

In 1993, returning to his Brooklyn roots, Dr. Young was appointed to the position of Community Superintendent, C.S.D. 13. As Superintendent, Dr. Young is credited for establishing two successful and highly sought-after schools (Benjamin Banneker Academy HS and Bedford Academy HS) as well as replicating the nationally recognized Algebra Project and Comer School Development Program. Chancellor Harold Levy appointed Dr. Young as Senior Superintendent (coordinating services in four Central Brooklyn Community School Districts). He also established and led the first NYC Office of Youth Development and School Community Services. In 2004, after 35 years of NYC public school service, Lester W. Young, Jr. retired from the NYCDOE. During 2004 – 2008, Dr. Young held the position of Visiting Professor at Long Island University, Graduate School of Education, Brooklyn Campus.

In March 2008, the New York State Legislature elected Lester W. Young, Jr. as Regent At Large, The University of the State of New York. During his four terms as Regent At Large, Dr. Young has served as Co-Chair of the P-12 Committee and Chair of the Higher Education Committee. He also Co-Chaired the Workgroup on Early Learning and Early Childhood Education and chaired the Workgroup to Improve Outcomes for Boys and Young Men of Color. His leadership in this area led to the establishment of the NYS My Brother's Keeper initiative. Also, due to actions by the NYS Legislature, New York remains the only state in the nation to have the My Brother's Keeper enacted into state law.

Continuing his commitment to public service, Dr. Young serves on the New York Commission on African American History and he is a member of the New York State Juvenile Justice Advisory Group. Additionally, Dr. Young is a Trustee for the Adelaide L. Sanford Institute (ASI); and the Brooklyn Navy Yard Board. During his career, Dr. Young has also been a Trustee on several not-for-profit boards serving the Brooklyn community (the Brooklyn Children's Museum, Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corp., and the Brooklyn Community Foundation).

Dr. Young volunteers as a mentor to superintendents, principals and aspiring leaders throughout New York City. He has been recognized by many local, national education, and civic education organizations for his professional contributions.

Dr. Young is profiled in Men of Courage II, documenting the lives and achievements of 27 African American Men. He is also a contributing writer to Child by Child: The Comer Process for Change in Education, 1999. Dr. Young is married to Dr. Renee Young and they are the proud parents of one son. Dr. Young received his Doctoral Degree in Education (Ed.D.) from Fordham University, specializing in Urban Education and the Master of Science Degree (MS) from Brooklyn College, CUNY.

NYS Portrait of a Graduate & Inquiry-Based Learning in PreK-Grade 5

Materials & Resources

To participate please use a laptop or tablet to access the provided materials and resources.



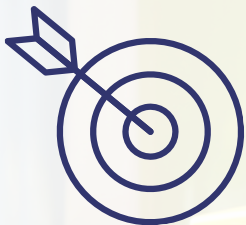
Portrait of a Graduate

What is NYS Portrait of a Graduate?



Science Everywhere

Session 2



Math Performance-Based Assessment

Session 2



Materials for Participants

Guiding Discussion Questions

Materials for Participants (Cont.)

QR Code for Post-Event Survey

