



Crystal Griffith  
Director of Workforce Development

As a business advocacy organization committed to fostering economic growth, The Business Council of New York State (BCNYS) recognizes the importance of equipping students with essential skills that go beyond industry boundaries. Among these skills, an emphasis on reading, math, writing, and comprehension lays the critical foundation for preparing individuals for success after graduation and workforce participation. As standing members of the New York Equity Coalition, we cannot ignore the alarming decline in reading and math scores of students across all grade levels. With this, BCNYS stands with the New York Equity Coalition in support of their Graduation Measures recommendations to the New York State Education Department's Blue Ribbon Commission.

In the coalition's released statement on graduation measures, *All New York State Students Deserve to Graduate Ready for the Future* statement, it is highlighted that "New York needs a bold and holistic P-20 approach to education that ensures all graduates can read, write, and have the skills necessary to both meet rigorous graduation requirements and succeed in college or careers." The statement emphasizes a focus that enables students to develop communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills. Human success and economic growth are fostered through a well-rounded education that fuels innovation. A well-rounded education leads to creative solutions for complex problems that often arise from interdisciplinary approaches, where literacy and numeracy intersect with imagination and ingenuity. By fostering a culture of innovation, K-12 education plays an integral role in driving economic growth and enhancing a nation's competitive edge.

ETS, the world's largest educational testing and assessment organization, reported that over 37 million working individuals need literacy support. The report went on to detail that while these same individuals experience success in their roles, the strong essential skills needed to operate in today's tech-focused workspaces could not be achieved— due to their low literacy skills. The dependency of technology in various industries demands a workforce that is technologically literate. Proficiency in reading enables individuals to comprehend complex technical manuals, while math skills underpin the understanding of quantitative aspects of technological systems. Moreover, the ability to write effectively facilitates the creation of user-friendly manuals, reports, and documentation that bridge the gap between technological innovation and everyday people.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of adults struggled in and out of the workplace because of low literacy skills. Now, post-pandemic and more than ever, this has only been exacerbated and businesses need a workforce that can perform using critical thinking and comprehension skills. These are skills that are built with a strong educational foundation through all grade levels.

As members of the NYSED PLAN Pilot Advisory Board, BCNYS supports hands-on and experiential learning and has been able to learn first-hand the benefits for both students and businesses through the new proposed measures. However, we support a learning experience that equally prioritizes performance-based learning and graduating students with exceptional reading, writing, and math skills. For these reasons, The Business Council of New York State supports the recommendations given by the New York Equity Coalition and urges NYSED to consider these in the reimagining of the NYS Graduation Measures.