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| Board of Education,  I attached two current events articles on education for you to read prior to the Board Meeting this Thursday. The first article shares insight on why some people oppose the State proposed data system known as inBloom. The second article highlights Governor's Cuomo's talking points on education during his recent State of the State speech.  We will briefly discuss the articles during the work session. I wrote two reflection questions for you to consider at the end of each article.  [Let’s use data but be cautious about inBloom](http://www.nyssba.org/news/on-board-online-december-16-2013/news/2013/12/12/on-board-online-december-16-2013/let-s-use-data-but-be-cautious-about-inbloom/) |
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| **On Board Online • December 16, 2013**  By Karen Zevin  As a market researcher and data analyst with considerable experience with quantitative and qualitative research and forecasting in the high tech, finance and advertising industries, I believe that data analysis plays an important role in sound decision-making. Every school district needs to have a secure place to store data on students, tools to analyze that data and a culture that supports use of data for continuous improvement.  The state’s decision to use inBloom, a web-based data storage service, has been controversial. I share concerns raised by my colleagues in the Westchester-Putnam School Boards Association and the school board and educational community of Croton-Harmon, where I serve. Issues include how student data will be used and stored, the integrity of the data being collected and the significant local costs of collecting the data.  While it’s clearly beneficial for local districts to collect and analyze data on students, including their performance on standardized tests, what’s unclear to me and my colleagues are the benefits of having the State Education Department or a contractor aggregate such information. While new data dashboards will help districts that don’t currently have them, many districts already use these tools. |

**Reflection Question-**

**1. Does the New York State Education Department need to mandate school districts to participate in a state run and state owned data collection system?**

**2. What is the author referring to when she mentions the integrity of the data being collected? It is listed as one of three issues with in Bloom.**

**Gov. Cuomo proposes bold education reforms in New York**

**New York Governor Andrew Cuomo is beginning 2014 with a new education plan. His reforms include upgrading classroom technology, universal pre-kindergarten, and a fund that would pay teachers generous performance bonuses.**

By Carolyn Thompson, Associated Press / January 11, 2014  
The Christian Science Monitor  
"There are great disparities in education," Cuomo said. "At some schools there are children who are on the Internet. Some schools don't have a basketball net."

Among his 2014 education plans, Cuomo wants to borrow $2 billion to pay for things like computers, tablets and Internet connectivity for districts around the state. The "Smart Schools" bond referendum would require voter approval.

Embracing recommendations from a statewide reform commission, Cuomo also proposes creating a Teacher Excellence Fund that would pay teachers performance bonuses of up to $20,000, and giving college scholarships to high school graduates pursuing math or science careers in exchange for their promise to work in the state for five years.

"You want teachers who can perform and who do perform? Then ... pay them like the professionals they are," Cuomo said during his State of the State address Wednesday.

But it was what Cuomo did not say that stood out for some, including the state's largest teachers union and some parent groups who have been seeking a "course correction" in reforms already under way.

"I give him great credit for wanting to put forward some bold ideas," [New York State United Teachers](http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/New+York+State+United+Teachers) President Richard Iannuzzi said. But Cuomo, he said, ignored "the elephant in the room" — the bumpy statewide shift to more challenging learning standards and high-stakes assessments.

A series of recent forums with Education Commissioner John King Jr. exposed the depth of frustration with the state's rollout of the new Common Core learning standards, which critics say has been rushed and uneven across districts. NYSUT has called for a three-year moratorium on using Common Core-aligned standardized tests in high-stakes decisions, such as teacher or school district ratings.

Cuomo's merit pay proposal, which would be tied to mandatory teacher evaluations that rely in part on the standardized tests, would be another mistake, he said.

"At the very least I would have hoped to hear from the governor that there is a great deal of stress in the system today and that stress was caused by a failed implementation of the Common Core," Iannuzzi said.

"It is well within the governor's power to slow down their implementation through legislative means," said Bianca Tanis, a New Paltz parent who said Cuomo appeared to be washing his hands of responsibility for "botched initiatives."

Instead, Cuomo spoke of the next steps in "our journey."

"We are in the midst of an education reinvention," he said, "replacing a 1950s bureaucracy with a 2020 performance organization."

With his budget proposal due in a couple of weeks, Cuomo did not say who would pay for universal pre-kindergarten throughout the state. School boards support the idea, said Timothy Kremer, executive director of the New York State School Boards Association, but don't want it tied to competitive grants that would help only some districts and eventually expire.

"We only ask that the governor's soon-to-be-released budget provide sufficient state aid for schools to maintain or add quality early childhood education programs," Kremer said.

**Reflection Questions:  
1. What can we tell about Cuomo's vision for education in NYS, based on his comments in the State of the State address?**

**2. Do you have any concerns with merit pay that is linked to student performance on standardized tests?**

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