



"REIMAGINE NEW YORK DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE"

BY DARRELL KUHN

To say that the Covid-19 pandemic has been a disruption to public school educators is a gigantic understatement. A new partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo announced could intensify this new abnormal.

At one of his daily news conferences in early May of 2020, Cuomo introduced the "Reimagine New York" initiative to the public. The initiative's purpose is to investigate ways to permanently integrate technology use in the educational process. At this point in time, it is unclear what this will ultimately look like. Cuomo said at that press conference that New York State officials will work with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to "convene experts and develop a blueprint to reimagine education in the new normal."

Public school educators from across the state have responded to "Reimagine New York" with skepticism. Cuomo's announcement provoked the ire of Andy Pallotta, President of New York State United Teachers, the statewide public school educators' union. Pallotta released a statement following Cuomo's announcement on NYSUT's website.

"NYSUT believes in the education of the whole child. Remote learning, in any form, will never replace the important personal connection between teachers and their students that is built in the classroom and is a critical part of the teaching and learning process — which is why we've seen educators work so hard during this pandemic to maintain those connections through video chats, phone calls and socially distant in-person meetings."

According to Pallotta, "If we want to reimagine education, let's start with addressing the need for social workers, mental health counselors, school nurses, enriching arts courses, advanced courses and smaller class sizes in school districts across the state. Let's secure the federal funding and new state revenues through taxes on the ultra-wealthy that can go toward addressing these needs. Let's recognize educators as the experts they are by including them in these discussions about improving our public education system for every student."

Every public school educator in New York State needs to pay attention to what transpires through this "Reimagine New York" initiative. Our careers could drastically change. Stay tuned for a follow-up story about "Reimagine New York" in the fall of 2020 issue of *The Pendulum*.

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