

The 50th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, questions the progress we have made as a society in providing all students with a quality education. The 1954 *Brown* decision is often remembered as a strong commentary regarding the psychological and emotional impact of segregation upon people of color, and not necessarily as a call to action for comparable achievement for all students. The last 20 years have begun to move that focus from racial integration to student achievement.

Therefore, today, the question is whether we have adequately addressed this issue. We have not! Based upon data that I'll share with you, we have two Long Island public school systems, one defined by student success and the other by continuing struggles.

As a result of years of significant gaps between white and minority student achievement, both the federal and state levels of government responded. The No Child Left Behind federal legislation and the 1995 New York State revised high school graduation requirements are explicit statements that all children can and should learn to world standards. Though there are many legitimate concerns regarding specific parts of these initiatives, no one doubts that they have focused both the public's and educator's attention on student achievement for each and every student group.

Both federal and state laws and regulations consist of four primary components: accountability, high expectations, financial resources and teacher quality. Strong accountability systems have forced school districts to recognize and attempt to address the various levels of achievement for each group of students within each school district. Calls for uniformly high expectations, regardless of student background, are incorporated into all statements and publications. Equalizing the amount of financial resources available to all districts has been pushed to the forefront of the state's agenda, due to the successful litigation of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

The fourth component is the one that has received the least attention and may be the most important, namely teacher quality.

As we debate the next steps to be taken to provide quality education for all students, we will have a tendency to focus on increased accountability and increased financial resources. Without quality teachers, the smallest of class sizes, the best of materials and computers, and the best data regarding student deficiencies cannot be employed successfully. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for Long Island's universities and public schools to develop specific strategies for improving the quality of education majors and those professionals already entrusted with our almost half million students.