

Education chief to leave

King to take job in Obama administration

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ALBANY — State Education Commissioner John King will step down as the state's top-ranking education official for a job in President Obama's administration.

King announced Wednesday he will leave the state Education Department to become senior adviser to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. His resignation will take effect at the end of the year. "I'm humbled and honored to have the chance to work with President Obama and Secretary Duncan," King said in a statement. "Their extraordinary leadership is helping students all across the nation get better prepared for college and careers. I'm excited to become part of that team." King, 39, has been the state commissioner since May 2011, when he was appointed by the state Board of Regents and became the first African-American to serve as the state's education chief. He oversaw the state's rollout of the Common Core, serving as a prominent backer of the more stringent education standards. New York's implementation of the standards drew widespread criticism from parents, teachers and students, who took to public forums across the state to loudly voice their displeasure — often with King sitting on stage. King also clashed with the state's teachers union, which called for his removal in April while criticizing him for the state's testing procedures and "failure to listen to classroom teachers." He helmed the Education Department as it implemented an updated teacher evaluation system, which included a greater reliance on student test scores. "We hope he has learned from his stormy tenure in New York state and look forward to working collaboratively and productively with the Regents to improve public education going forward," the New York State United Teachers Union wrote in a statement Wednesday.

His tenure drew praise from supporters of the Common Core, which is being implemented in more than 40 states and is touted by advocates as a way to make students more ready for college and careers. StudentsFirstNY, an education group that supports the Common Core and charter schools, said King leaves an "extraordinary legacy." "John King showed that if you raise standards in a smart way, students will rise to the challenge," StudentsFirstNY executive director Jenny Sedlis said in a statement. "It's no wonder he's been tapped for a national post. New York's loss is the nation's gain." Senate Education Committee Chairman John Flanagan, R-Suffolk County, said King is an "extraordinarily talented and bright and passionate individual." Flanagan said King's consistently evenkeeled temperament was often mistaken for a lack of conviction, which Flanagan said is "completely wrong." "I think he was absolutely, overwhelmingly focused on children and their well-being, including minority kids in particular," Flanagan said. "Did we always agree? Absolutely not, but he was always a gentleman, professional in every respect and aspect." Regents Chancellor Merryl Tisch said the board will create a search committee next week to find King's successor. She praised King for being a "remarkable leader in a time of true reform."

"We will ensure a smooth and efficient transition," Tisch said. "We have a strong leadership team in place at the (Education) Department.



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