

# Talking Points for Regents Workgroup on New York State Graduation Requirements

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this workgroup to discuss possible changes to New York’s graduation requirements.

With the recent adoption of the New York State Next Generation English Language Arts and Mathematics Learning Standards, New York State P-12 Science Learning Standards, and the Arts Standards and development and/or revision of the Physical Education, World Language and Computer Science and Digital Literacy Standards, and generation of new state assessments, this should be a starting point in the conversation on graduation policies.

Changes to graduation requirements carry enormous consequences – some potentially unintended – on our schools, students and teachers. These issues are vitally important and should be thoroughly debated and studied before any decisions of such significance are made.

Questions	Topics for Discussion
<p><b>Question I:</b> <b>What do we want students to know and be able to do before they graduate?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ New York’s ESSA Plan defines a well-rounded education in New York now as “a robust array of courses, activities, and programs in visual and performing arts; science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); humanities; civics and government; economics; computer science; career and technical education; health and wellness; and physical education.”</li> <li>➤ Opportunities for students to plan for successful pathways for graduation with the intent of being exposed to as many options as possible to be successful.</li> <li>➤ Students need to continually gain new competencies and obtain information to solve problems through civic engagement. Schools need to identify where schooled knowledge meets emerging needs. Both individuals and institutions need to be successful at adapting to changing conditions</li> <li>➤ Students need opportunities to be citizens of the world, at home and be able to navigate among its variety of cultures, ideas and lifestyles.</li> <li>➤ Students need to be grounded in social emotional learning and opportunities to regularly practice SEL skills; the quality of school climate may be the single most predictive factor in promoting student achievement.</li> <li>➤ Access to options such as career and technical education; college courses; an advanced course (e.g. Advanced Placement); or an International Baccalaureate (IB) without becoming an equity issue across Districts?</li> <li>➤ With the adoption of the New York State Next Generation English Language Arts and Mathematics Learning Standards, New York State P-12 Science Learning Standards and new assessments, the rigor and equity of ELA/math/science standards implementation and the development of corresponding new assessments should be examined.</li> <li>➤ How are conditions going to change to help high needs low resourced schools</li> </ul>

	<p>meet graduation requirements?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Students should be given the opportunity to develop significant knowledge and skills, to use their knowledge to produce original content, products or ideas and to connect their learning to their interests.</li> <li>➤ Students who complete career and technical education programs are better prepared to make informed college and career decisions thanks to the real-world experiences they have in high school.</li> <li>➤ In the current global economy, students need to study a second language if they are to be competitive, have a greater understanding of and appreciation for other cultures, the larger world and the concept of language and communication. With the elimination of the World Language Regents exams, the study of World Languages is looked upon differently than other subjects.</li> <li>➤ School counselors play a critical role in student's meeting high school graduation requirements and preparing for college and career. There needs to be an adequate counselor to student ratio, beginning in middle school, to support a comprehensive guidance program that assures attention to and planning for a student's academic, career, and personal and social development.</li> <li>➤ If the goal is to have students learn skills and acquire knowledge to successfully enter a post-secondary or technical program, the military, and/or obtain a job that leads to a rewarding and viable career, consider reasonable accommodations, alternate paths and a longer graduation trajectory to serve students with more complex learning needs and backgrounds.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 2:</b> <b>How do we want students to demonstrate such knowledge and skills?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ There already exist several pathways to graduation through passing four Regents exams and an approved pathway exam. These include true pathways and several exam substitutions that are called pathways.</li> <li>➤ The pathways could be revised/extended to include true pathways. For example a STEM pathway could include a technology and/or engineering course as well as science and math.</li> <li>➤ Demonstrating achievement through other measures of achievement are great programs for students but how do you ensure students demonstrate competency and how will Districts find funding to implement them?</li> <li>➤ Performance-based assessments, Portfolios and Project-based learning are all measures of achievement to be considered with the appropriate professional development for educators.</li> <li>➤ Apprenticeships, work-based learning experiences and workforce development experience should all be considered.</li> <li>➤ Develop assessment programs that identify competencies, tasks and mechanisms for scoring and interpretation and a data framework of reusable assessment components. Provide opportunities for realistic problems, simulations and other formats.</li> <li>➤ An array of multiple measures of student assessment should be identified and available.</li> <li>➤ Units of study/credit may need to be re-defined to reflect greater flexibility in</li> </ul>

	<p>assessment and measurement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Non-traditional opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills should be explored.</li> <li>➤ A single assessment could reflect integrated measures across subject areas reflecting a range of content in ELA, math, sciences, etc.</li> <li>➤ Increase equitable learning opportunities for every student to demonstrate knowledge and skills through personalization and multiple pathways to address the range of abilities and unique needs of our students.</li> <li>➤ For students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, let them use their dominant language. Provide access to translated state assessments for the over 200 languages spoken by our ELLs rather than inequitably just the five commonly spoken languages determined over two decades ago.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 3:</b> How do you measure learning and achievement (as it pertains to the answers to #2 above) to ensure they are indicators of high school completion?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Since the New York State learning standard movement and changes in graduation requirements, many more students are taking the New York State Regents examinations.</li> <li>➤ State Education Department data indicates that the percentage of graduates earning a Regents Diploma (both Regents Diploma and Regents Diploma with Advanced Distinction) has increased.</li> <li>➤ Regents' exams do not measure student achievement. Regents exams measure specific New York State learning standards in specific content areas, developed by a panel of content teachers and specialists.</li> <li>➤ Passing of Regents exams is not necessarily an indicator of college readiness. There are many factors, academic (i.e. high school grades, courses taken) and nonacademic (i.e. motivation, college aspirations, maturity, interests), that should be considered. The requisite knowledge for success in college is different based upon the demands of specific programs.</li> <li>➤ The emphasis should be on career awareness, exploration and immersion as well as development of the foundational knowledge and skills necessary to successfully navigate the workplace.</li> <li>➤ Provide for a flexible modular assessment (summative and formative) delivery model, for in-context embedded assessments to support a wide variety of learning environments. Students and teachers have opportunities to demonstrate how complex performances might be scaffolded over learning progressions to measure change/competency.</li> <li>➤ The central dilemma regarding ELLs on large-scale assessments, such as the Regents exam, is that students are not sufficiently proficient in English to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities on assessments designed for native English speakers. A performance-based or portfolio assessment is more valid and accurate for this population.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 4:</b> How can measures of achievement accurately</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue to provide diploma options for students with disabilities including retaining the current safety net.</li> <li>➤ Students at risk of not meeting state standards must be provided with appropriate interventions and support services to address their learning and behavioral needs.</li> </ul>

<p><b>reflect the skills and knowledge of our special populations, such as students with disabilities and English language learners?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Instruction should be based upon the individual needs of the students. Assessment should recognize those individual needs in order to provide students with every opportunity to demonstrate proficiency.</li> <li>➤ Allowing Safety Nets for recent arrival ELLs provides the opportunity for students who are making adequate progress to graduate in spite of the challenges they face.</li> <li>➤ Be cautious not to lower expectations for students’ academic achievement by tracking them in less rigorous classes as they develop English proficiency as it can derail them from meeting graduating requirements.</li> <li>➤ Many ELLs with IEPs who have been in the system prior to the 2018 CR Part 154 regulation are unable to test out of ENL services. This may not be a language acquisition issue but rather the disability. Approved alternative examinations need to be developed.</li> <li>➤ The challenge to meet the graduation requirements within the four years is the greatest for Long-Term ELLs, Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) and Newcomers who struggle with academic English. As a result, the dropout rate for this population is the highest. A graduation pathway with credit recovery and support systems in place to customize a course of study for them is greatly needed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 5: What course requirements or examinations will ensure that students are prepared for college and careers or civic engagement?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Different options could impact equity across Districts.</li> <li>➤ As mentioned in question #1, New York’s ESSA Plan defines a well-rounded education in New York now as “a robust array of courses, activities, and programs in visual and performing arts; science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); humanities; civics and government; economics; computer science; career and technical education; health and wellness; and physical education.” Students should have the opportunity to receive a well-rounded education grounded in the standards.</li> <li>➤ The course requirements and examinations are often influenced by the entrance requirements of higher education. This discussion cannot take place without all levels and institutions of higher education involved.</li> <li>➤ Graduation should be based on minimum diploma requirements reflecting basic competencies. However, students should be provided opportunities to demonstrate higher levels of content mastery.</li> <li>➤ In addition to Participation in Government, students could take courses with an experiential learning component in Social Justice, Political Theory, Public Policy, Organizing, and Diversity. Students should take part in service learning and leadership programs, student government, mock UN programs, debate, public speaking, community service engagement and collaboration in social movements.</li> <li>➤ Continue to award a seal of biliteracy that recognizes the importance of bilingualism, places value on the instruction of foreign and native languages in schools, and affirms the value of diversity in our increasingly multilingual society.</li> </ul>