



TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: Cosimo Tangorra, Jr.

SUBJECT: Arts Assessment Study

DATE: September 8, 2014

AUTHORIZATION(S):

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

Does the Board of Regents wish to commission an operational study that would develop a methodology to determine the comparability of selected arts assessments to Regents exams?

Reason(s) for Consideration

Review of Policy

Proposed Handling

This item will come before the P-12 Education Committee for discussion at the September 2014 meeting.

Background Information

In May 2014, the Board discussed several issues related to the use of rigorous career and technical assessments as a pathway to graduation. At that time, the Board suggested that an arts graduation pathway also be established. An approved arts program, ending in a skills assessment, would form the instructional foundation for a potential arts graduation pathway. Currently, a student interested in the arts must pass five Regents exams and complete a five unit course of study in the arts to earn a Regents Diploma with advanced designation in the Arts. Students in these programs are required to create competitive portfolios which are useful for entrance to undergraduate art programs. In addition, students may earn college credit in the arts by taking AP exams or participating in dual enrollment programs. An arts pathway, if

adopted by the Board of Regents, could require students to pass four Regents exams, a rigorous Regents-caliber arts assessment and complete a course of study in the arts.

The Board has been focused on the development of multiple, rigorous pathways to graduation for several years. In order to identify sufficiently challenging and relevant examinations in career and technical subjects, the Regents commissioned a Blue Ribbon Technical Assessment Commission in 2012. The Blue Ribbon Commission was co-chaired by Chancellor Emeritus Robert Bennett and Monroe County Community College president Anne Kress. The Commission included representatives from higher education, business and industry, National Center on Education and the Economy, and Southern Region Education Board.

Research for the Commission was provided by Cornell University. Cornell subcontracted with the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRCCTE) at the University of Louisville to conduct technical reviews of CTE examinations. The reviews were based on the criteria and recommendations from an Expert Advisory Board. The NRCCTE gathered information from key stakeholders, including higher education institutions, employers and employer organizations, state and federal agencies, and organizations not represented on the Expert Advisory Board that produced CTE examinations. The Expert Advisory Board developed the following questions for CTE assessment providers:

1. Do you have evidence that employers use the assessment when making hiring decisions? Do applicants who have achieved the cut scores get preferential treatment, all else equal, in the application process (e.g., more likely to get an interview) and in hiring?
2. How are Subject Matter Experts selected? What is the proportion from industry, from education?
3. Can you give detail on alignment with standards? Which specific standards? What is your definition of alignment?
4. Can you provide sample test items to demonstrate depth and complexity for comparison with Regents examination questions? Some of the same items could illustrate alignment with standards.

The Expert Advisory Panel determined 13 technical exams to be equal in rigor to a Regents Exam. In July 2013, the Blue Ribbon Commission approved the recommendations of the Expert Panel. All of the exams required a rigorous multi-course program of study.

Work in the arts engages students in a complex array of choices and critical decisions that require goal seeking, persistence, overcoming technical and creative obstacles, and the search for solutions. In order to remain a nation of originators and creators, we must value these skills. High quality arts assessments provide the type of reliable evidence needed to show attainment of desired learning. Measuring student learning in the arts will offer relevant and reliable evidence of what students truly understand and know how to do.

Recommendation

The Department recommends that the Board of Regents commission an operational study that would establish criteria to identify and evaluate arts assessments in each discipline that signify college and career readiness as well as those that are truly worthy of Regents recognition. Similar to the approach used in career and technical education pathways, the proposed process would begin with the establishment of an Arts Advisory Panel. The Panel would consist of members knowledgeable about arts assessment, including representatives from the New York State Dance Education Association, the NYS Media Arts Teachers Association, the NYS School Music Association, the NYS Theatre Education Association and the NYS Art Teachers Association as well as nationally recognized experts in the field of arts assessment. The Arts Advisory Panel will identify assessments for review; develop a framework for reviewing selected assessments and a concise format for presenting results.

In addition to criteria identified by the Panel's expert members, key standards for evaluating an arts assessment would include:

1. **The assessment provides credible evidence that the student is college and career ready.** Following are some sources of credibility:
 - (a) The assessment is recognized by employers in an arts industry sector.
 - (b) The assessment is widely recognized by postsecondary institutions within New York, for admissions and/or credit.
2. **The assessment includes academic as well as technical learning.** The following factors are considered:
 - (a) The assessment covers a broad range of learning in that arts discipline.
 - (b) The rigor of the assessment is comparable to that of Regents examinations.
3. **The assessment meets the following technical requirements.**
 - (a) The assessment is aligned with existing knowledge and best practice and updated regularly.
 - (b) Performance assessments focus on alignment to NYS standards and rigor, identifying claims to be made about the students, skills, evidence, instructions, accommodations, rubrics and supplemental and support materials.
 - (c) The assessment has acceptable psychometric properties. It is properly validated and free from ethnic or gender bias.
 - (d) The assessment questions are secure and administration oversight comparable to a Regents examination.

The Arts Advisory Panel would conduct an investigation and submit a report that identifies and describes assessments that sufficiently measure student academic growth in the arts (dance, music, theatre and visual arts), pre-school through twelfth grade. The search for extant assessment instruments and assessment material that

New York might use in determining student achievement in arts education will maximize arts assessment resources for the field. A similar report in the visual arts was prepared for the Colorado Department of Education in 2012.

Assessments that are recommended for recognition by the Regents will be listed with brief descriptions and accounts of the rationale for their selection. Teachers, administrators, parents, school boards, and NYSED will be able to identify especially strong arts programs by reviewing students' performance on the identified assessments.

In addition to providing a set of recommended arts assessments along with a rationale for their adoption and information on each, the study would provide a template that can be used in the future to add more arts assessments to the approved list while stimulating arts educators and assessment providers to propose additional assessments for adoption.

Next Steps

If the Board of Regents commissions this study, a report will be provided with an update at a future meeting.