



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY,  
NY 12234

**TO:** P-12 Education Committee  
**FROM:** John B. King, Jr.  
**SUBJECT:** Reporting of College- and Career-Ready High School  
Graduation Rates  
**DATE:** September 7, 2010  
**AUTHORIZATION(S):**

### **SUMMARY**

#### **Issue for Decision**

In order to give educators more information about how effectively they are preparing their students for college and careers, does the Board of Regents support the Department's proposal to publish data for each high school and district showing what percentage of students are graduating from high school with a score of 80 or better on their math Regents exam and a score of 75 or better on their English Regents exam?

#### **Proposed Handling**

This item will come before the P-12 Education Committee for action at its September 2010 meeting.

#### **Background Information**

In today's economy, in which 7 of the top 10 fastest-growing occupations require a post-secondary degree,<sup>1</sup> what proportion of New York's students graduate from high school ready to tackle college-level work? As the College and Career Readiness Work Group discussed in April, far too many of our graduates are found to require remediation in English, math, or both when they enter college—despite having satisfied the State's increasingly rigorous high school graduation requirements. About a quarter of all freshmen in New York 2- and 4-year colleges require remediation, and CUNY has found that nearly 75% of its community college freshmen require remediation. Although the additional support of remediation can help students that need it, remedial courses do not count towards graduation requirements, so students who require extensive remediation are much less likely to earn enough credits to graduate.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, [http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep\\_table\\_103.htm](http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_103.htm).

A strong foundation in math and English skills is just one aspect of college and career readiness, of course, but it is an important one. At the July meeting of the Board of Regents, the Department presented research showing the relationship between Regents exam scores and students' college readiness:

- Students who score below 80 on their math Regents exam are likely to be placed into remedial, non-credit-bearing courses.<sup>2</sup>
- Once in college, students who scored above 80 on their math Regents exam have more than a 60% chance of earning a C or better in their first college-level math course.<sup>3</sup>
- Students who score at least a 75 on their English Regents exam have more than an 80% chance of earning a C or better in Freshman Composition.<sup>4</sup>
- Admissions directors from 2- and 4-year public and private colleges across the state say that a Regents exam score of 75 to 85 is a minimum threshold for college readiness.<sup>5</sup>
- A Regents exam score of 75 is considered by many to be roughly equivalent to a 500 on the SAT, another common benchmark of college readiness.

Based on this research, the Department redefined "proficiency" on its grades 3-8 math and English assessments to mean that a student is on track to score an 80 or better on the math Regents exam and a 75 or better on the English Regents exam.

#### Reporting college- and career-ready high school graduation data

The Department now proposes to publish college- and career-ready graduation rate calculations that show what percentage of students are graduating from high school with a score of 80 or better on their math Regents exam and 75 or better on their English Regents exam.<sup>6</sup> Schools and districts will be able to evaluate this information in combination with the grades 3-8 math and English proficiency data to get a better sense of how effectively they are preparing students for college and careers. To facilitate comparisons, the college- and career-ready graduation rate data will be published alongside actual graduation rate data. The Department plans to publish this year's data by December 2010.

This year's release will include four-year graduation rate information for students who entered grade 9 in the 2006-07 school year and earned either a local or Regents

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<sup>2</sup> CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

<sup>3</sup> CUNY OIRA.

<sup>4</sup> CUNY OIRA.

<sup>5</sup> Office of Higher Education, New York State Education Department, telephone survey of admissions directors (July 2010); see also Chancellor Emeritus Robert M. Bennett, survey findings reported in Jay Rey, "Floundering freshmen: First-year students are underprepared, college survey finds," *Buffalo News* (August 30, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Note that because the local diploma is still available, these calculations will include some graduates who earned between a 55 and a 64 on one or more of their social studies or science Regents exams, and because the RCT Safety Net is still in effect for students with disabilities, the calculations will include some students with disabilities who earned a local diploma by passing social studies or science RCTs.

diploma.<sup>7</sup> For this cohort, general education graduation requirements for a local diploma include a score of 65 or better on three Regents exams and 55 or better on two Regents exams. Graduation rates will be presented for the State as a whole, each Need/Resource Capacity category, and each of the Big 5 city school districts. Data will be disaggregated by race/ethnicity and for students with disabilities and English language learners. Five-year and six-year outcomes will be available for students who entered Grade 9 in the 2005-06 school year and the 2004-05 school year, respectively.

The reporting will only be informational, as these score thresholds currently do not carry any consequences for students, schools, or districts in New York's educational accountability system.<sup>8</sup>

### Recommendation

That the Board of Regents approves the Department's proposal to publish data showing what percentage of students are graduating from high school with a score of 80 or better on their math Regents exam and a score of 75 or better on their English Regents exam.

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<sup>7</sup> The actual graduation rate data the Department reports this fall will include students who graduated through August 2010, and college- and the career-ready graduation rate data will include students who graduated through June 2010. Starting next fall, both sets of data will include students who graduated through August.

<sup>8</sup> Experience suggests that the Board of Regents' decision to redefine "proficiency" on the grades 3-8 math and English assessments to mean that a student is on track to score an 80 or better on the math Regents exam and a 75 or better on the English Regents exam is likely, over time, to lead to an increase in the percentage of students attaining those scores. If the Board were to adopt new rules requiring that the performance of districts or schools be measured against the percentage of students who actually attain these Regents scores, districts and schools would likely change their practices to ensure more students could meet those thresholds. Likewise, if students who attained these Regents scores were awarded some kind of college- and career-readiness credential, it is likely that the percentage of students meeting the standards would climb. As noted above, however, a strong foundation in math and English skills is just one aspect of college and career readiness, albeit an important one. Accountability policies should be considered holistically and with a view towards their consequences, both intended and unintended.