



**TO:** The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents

**FROM:** Beth Berlin *Eloise Berlin*

**SUBJECT:** Regents 2015-16 State Budget Priorities

**DATE:** October 20, 2014

**AUTHORIZATION(S):** *J. B. G. G.*  
**SUMMARY**

**Issue for Discussion**

The Regents advance state budget priorities every year. At the October meeting, the relevant committees of the Board will review the proposals to be advanced in 2015-16, other than State Aid to school districts, which is handled separately through the Regents Subcommittee on State Aid. The proposals will come before the full Board in November for approval.

**Reason(s) for Consideration**

Regents discussion of the 2015-16 state budget priorities.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Regents review the proposed budget priorities as follows and make recommendations for approval at the November 2014 meeting.

Eliminate stand-alone multiple choice field testing, reduce testing time, and release more test questions	\$8.4 million
Higher Education Opportunity Programs	\$6.0 million
Enhancing the Achievement of English Language Learners	\$14.75 million
Early Learning Support	\$676,000
Adult Education – Workforce Preparation	\$5.0 million
Public Library Construction	\$1.4 million
State Aid Modeling	\$2.0 million
Erasure Analysis of Test Results	\$500,000



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## **Eliminate Stand-alone Multiple Choice Field Testing, Reduce Testing Time, and Release More Test Questions**

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### ***THE ISSUE:***

New York's testing system is among the most transparent in the country. In addition to posting the criteria used to develop, select, and review each test question and reading passage, the Department released 50 percent of this year's grade 3-8 test questions, with explanations of the correct and incorrect answers. Schools receive data on how every student performed on every question. New York educators are involved in every step of the development process and approve every question.

However, because the Department prints the grades 3-8 tests internally, only four versions of the exam can be created and shipped to school districts. While printing tests internally is less costly for the state, it prevents the Department from printing sufficient test versions (e.g., other states print 20-25 or more test versions). As a result, the Department is required to conduct stand-alone field testing in order to have enough test questions banked to develop the following year's exam and to be reused on future exams.

The Regents and the Department share the concerns that have been raised about the limited number of test questions that were released following the grades 3-8 tests. We agree that test questions can have instructional value for teachers who may, in the context of the standards, use questions from previous tests as exemplars, not for the purposes of excessive test preparation, but to inform lessons and classroom activities. Given that test questions from one year may be used in a future year's test, having a limited number of printed test versions prevents the Department from releasing more test questions to educators and parents.

With additional funding, the Department would be able to print more versions of the test, which would allow the Department to embed more field test questions, eliminate stand-alone multiple choice field tests, and release significantly more test questions.

### ***2015-16 Budget Request – \$8.4 million additional state funds to support:***

- Modified Printing
- Increased Security Features
- Packaging and Distribution
- Storage, Collection, and Technical Support



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## Supporting NYS Access & Opportunity Programs

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### ***THE ISSUE:***

**Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP):** HEOP serves over 4,600 students through 53 programs by providing financial aid, pre-freshman summer programs, remedial/developmental courses, tutoring, and counseling to students attending independent colleges. HEOP students, who do not meet the traditional academic criteria when they are admitted to college, typically earn their degrees at rates that equal or exceed other students. With mentoring and support, 58 percent of HEOP students graduate within five years of enrolling, compared with a 12 percent graduation rate for low-income students nationally.

**Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP):** STEP is a program that provides academic enrichment in science and mathematics with the purpose of increasing the number of historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students prepared to enter college, and improving their participation rate in mathematics, science, technology, health-related fields and the licensed professions. STEP serves over 10,500 students through 60 programs. A 2010-11 review of the program revealed that 78 percent of participants have a 3.0 GPA or higher, STEP students graduate at a higher rate and more STEP graduates pursue postsecondary education than their peers.

**Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP):** CSTEP is a program that provides academic enrichment and research experience in STEM content areas in order to increase the number of historically under-represented and economically disadvantaged undergraduate and graduate students who complete programs of study that lead to professional licensure and to careers in mathematics, science, technology, and health-related fields. CSTEP programs serve over 6,500 students through 49 programs.

**Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP):** LPP offers comprehensive pre-collegiate/dropout prevention programs and services to over 12,600 youth at 40 programs across New York State. A 2010-11 review of the program revealed that over 95 percent of LPP students in grades 5 and 11 advanced to the next grade level as well as a 93 percent graduation rate for LPP seniors.

### ***2015-16 Budget Request- \$6 million additional state funds***

The Department supports the following funding increases for these programs:

**HEOP:** An additional **\$2 million** to increase the number of students served by 357.

**STEP:** An additional **\$1.5 million** to continue or expand current eligible projects by another 5 to 8 programs and up to 1,000 additional students.

**CSTEP:** An additional **\$1.5 million** to continue or expand current eligible projects by another 4 to 6 programs and up to 800 additional students.

**LPP:** An additional **\$1 million** to increase the number of students served by 800.



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## **Enhancing the Achievement of English Language Learners**

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### ***THE ISSUE:***

Over the past 10 years, New York's English Language Learner (ELL) student enrollment has increased by 20 percent. According to the US Education Department, ELL student enrollment has increased by 18 percent nationally. Currently in New York, over 230,000 ELLs make up 8.9 percent of the total student population. Their linguistic diversity makes up over 140 languages spoken in New York; for 61.5 percent of ELLs, Spanish is their home language. In addition, 41.2 percent were born in another country. In addition, New York school districts experienced a 44 percent increase in Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) between the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years.

While "ever ELLs" (students who were identified as ELLs at one time, but achieved English proficiency and exited ELL status) generally achieve graduation rates almost equal to that of all non-ELLs, the graduation rate of current ELLs lags well below that of non-ELLs. In June 2013, only 31.4 percent of ELLs graduated, compared to 74.9 percent of all students. The new Part 154 regulations will provide critical support for ELLs to achieve proficiency in English, and remove barriers preventing ELLs from fully accessing school programs and graduating from high school.

In order to effectively implement the newly revised Part 154 Regulations, the Regents and the Department will make a budget request to support effective needs assessment, planning and implementation of these new changes at both the state and district levels. Resources to help districts to better address the needs of ELLs will also be addressed in the deliberations of the Regents State Aid committee.

### ***2015-16 Budget Request – \$14,750,000 million additional state funds to support:***

- Monitoring and compliance support to assist districts with implementation of new requirements.
- Curriculum specialists to provide technical assistance and support to districts opening new bilingual programs.
- Timely, responsive, and evidence-driven guidance and technical assistance.
- Native Language Arts test development and implementation supports to provide districts with the option of offering this assessment when it would best measure progress of Spanish-speaking ELLs.
- Expansion of Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks (RBERNs) to provide locally-based language assistance, resources and support throughout the regions of the state.



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## Building Early Learning Capacity

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### ***THE ISSUE:***

The Regents have long recognized the need to build a continuum of educational services from prekindergarten through 3rd grade. This continuum would ensure that children are ready for kindergarten and also keep students on track for school success.

Research has shown that investments in quality early childhood programs yield significant long-term benefits, both in school and adult life, especially for students from lower income families. Quality prekindergarten programs improve early language and reading skills, and thus put children on track for college and career readiness later in their school careers.

The 2013-14 and 2014-15 enacted state budgets included significant new investments in pre-kindergarten through enactment of a \$25 million pre-kindergarten priority grant and a \$340 million statewide, full-day pre-kindergarten grant (which allocated \$300 million for New York City and \$40 million for the rest of the state). In addition to these two programs, the Department has long administered the traditional universal pre-kindergarten program (which is funded at approximately \$380 million) and a small targeted pre-kindergarten program.

As the Department's oversight responsibilities have grown, the internal staff resource capacity has not kept pace. With large expansions of the programs, it is critical that the Department secure additional staff capacity to provide proper oversight of children in early learning settings, as well as to provide guidance to ensure high-quality programming.

### ***2015-16 Budget Request – \$676,000 additional state funds to support:***

- Additional staff capacity to provide:
  - Adequate and regular oversight.
  - Timely, responsive, and evidence-driven guidance and technical assistance.
  - Monitoring to ensure high-quality programming.



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## **Adult Education – Workforce Preparation**

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### ***THE ISSUE:***

Approximately 2.8 million out-of-school New Yorkers ages 16 and older are economically at risk because they lack a high school diploma or the equivalent. There are persistent areas of need, particularly in densely populated areas of the state. Greater demand for skills and services coupled with diminished resources and supply is making our workers and our economy less competitive.

Across geographic areas and industries, many jobs that once did not require a high school diploma do require one today. At the same time, standards for achieving a high school equivalency (HSE) diploma are increasing nationally (including in New York).

The Department's budget request would provide under-educated, out-of-school youth and adults with the skills and credentials required for workforce success, including greater programming for a more rigorous high school equivalency diploma that began administration in 2014.

### ***2015-16 Budget Request – \$5.0 million additional state funds***

For more information contact the

Office of Governmental Relations, New York State Education Department, (518) 486-5644



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## Public Library Construction

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### ***THE ISSUE:***

The state budget has provided \$14 million annually in capital funds to support public library construction grants since 2006-07. The program is highly visible and has been very successful. During its first seven years in operation, the program supported a total of 1,267 construction grant projects for 602 unique public library and library system facilities.

The Regents have endorsed the concept that all public libraries should be able to accommodate new technologies and provide the knowledge resources New Yorkers need to be successful in an information-driven global environment. Despite the many successes of the current public library construction grant program, there is still a pressing need for state support. The estimated need for new construction, expansion and renovation of existing library facilities to ensure that New York's libraries are accessible to all library users and can accommodate advances in technology is over \$2.2 billion. Approximately half of all public library buildings in New York are now over 60 years old, and nearly a third are more than 30 years old.

***2015-16 Budget Request – \$1.4 million additional state funds***



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## State Aid Modeling

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### ***THE ISSUE:***

The Department oversees the statistical data modeling of over \$21 billion in state aid to public school districts annually. A critical role for the Department is to provide estimates of school aid throughout the budget process to the executive and to the legislature, a process that involves calculating 15 or more formulas for nearly 700 school districts using more than 2.1 million data points. The current system is highly accurate and effective but was developed over 30 years ago, and relies heavily on one highly skilled operator. The program, written in COBOL, currently runs on a dated Unisys mainframe reaching the limits of its useful life.

### ***2015-16 Budget Request – \$2.0 million additional state funds to support:***

- Development of a new state aid model that meets the following business requirements:
  - Speed – The current model can process calculations in under 5 minutes and it is expected the new model would maintain the same capability.
  - Flexibility – Formulas are changed or added every year and the model must be able to accommodate new data elements quickly.
  - Accuracy – School aid represents approximately 30 percent of state operating funds.
  - Reporting – The system must be able to quickly export data to EXCEL and other reporting packages to support the variety of reports for purposes of public reporting.
  - User Interface – The new model must feature a graphical user interface that supports drop down menus and selections.



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## **Erasure Analysis of Test Results**

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### ***THE ISSUE:***

Erasure analysis involves statistical analysis of student answer sheets to identify irregular patterns of changed responses. These analyses typically focus on whether there is a statistically unlikely frequency of incorrect-to-correct answer changes within a sample of students, with an irregularly high number of changed responses providing evidence of possible test security violations, such as student, class, or school level cheating. Erasure analyses are among the most commonly used and respected tools for identifying possible testing irregularities, in part because these analyses are considered cost-effective compared to other forensic and audit techniques.

The Department will continue to work with regional information centers to collect the necessary data and seeks to retain additional expertise to perform analysis of the data.

***2015-16 Budget Request – \$500,000 additional state funds***