



**TO:** P-12 Education Committee

**FROM:** Kimberly Young Wilkins 

**SUBJECT:** Proposed Amendment to Section 100.5 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education Relating to the Civic Readiness Pathway to Graduation and the New York State Seal of Civic Readiness

**DATE:** April 29, 2021

**AUTHORIZATION(S):**  

### SUMMARY

#### **Issue for Discussion**

Should the Board of Regents adopt the amendment of section 100.5 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education relating to the Civic Readiness Pathway to graduation and the New York State Seal of Civic Readiness?

#### **Reason(s) for Consideration**

Review of Policy.

#### **Proposed Handling**

The proposed amendment is being presented to the P-12 Education Committee for discussion at the May 2021 Regents meeting. A copy of the proposed rule is attached (Attachment A).

#### **Procedural History**

A Notice of Proposed Rule Making will be published in the State Register on May 26, 2021. Supporting materials are available upon request from the Secretary to the Board of Regents.

#### **Background Information**

In January 2018, the NYS Board of Regents adopted the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The ESSA plan reflects the Board's commitment to educational equity. The ESSA plan states that the mission of the Board of Regents is to provide positive learning environments so that every student is prepared for college, career, and citizenship. The

NYSED ESSA plan purposefully includes Civic Readiness in measures of school accountability, school quality, and student success. Providing robust K-12 instruction and experiential learning in civics is central to the New York State Education Department's (NYSED or Department) ESSA plan.

Our nation's public schools were founded to develop citizens with knowledge about the rights and responsibilities of self-government. Civic-ready students use civic knowledge, skills, and mindsets to make decisions and take actions for themselves, their communities, and the public good as members of a culturally diverse, democratic society. Schools, therefore, provide students meaningful opportunities to develop specific civic knowledge, skills, and mindsets, and to participate in authentic actions and experiences that are necessary for them to function as productive civic participants within their schools, communities, states, our country, and the world.

The Department is committed to empowering the civic agency of students and promoting student civic readiness as part of their prekindergarten-grade 12 education. NYSED understands that the standards we seek our children to attain can only be fully achieved by incorporating a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens in every facet of our work. This understanding has created an urgency around promoting equitable opportunities that help all children thrive. By promoting civic readiness in schools, our goal is to develop students' abilities across lines of difference and elevate historically marginalized voices. Through civic readiness students gain the skills necessary to achieve their personal goals, including financial literacy to enable them to attend to their own needs and thus enabling them to become positive agents of social change.

Subsequently, in 2018, the Department established a Civic Readiness Task Force (Task Force) charged with making recommendations that included, but were not limited to, defining "civic readiness" and considering such initiatives as a State Seal of Civic Readiness, and a Civics Capstone Project. The 33 members of the Task Force include teachers, curriculum specialists, school administrators, college professors, and representatives of civic organizations of diverse backgrounds from all parts of the State. The group met in person in plenary sessions with representatives of the Department through 2019 and continue to meet within both a large group and in smaller subcommittees with NYSED representatives.

In January 2020, the Civic Readiness Task Force presented [recommendations](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/CCCRWG%20-%20Civic%20Readiness%20Initiative%20Presentation.pdf) (https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/CCCRWG%20-%20Civic%20Readiness%20Initiative%20Presentation.pdf) to the Board of Regents. These recommendations included a definition of Civic Readiness, a Civics Capstone Project, and the Seal of Civic Readiness. NYSED released a Civic Readiness Survey and received public comments from May 1, 2020 until October 1, 2020. Eight hundred thirty-six respondents represented all geographic regions of New York State, with 84 percent of the responses coming from teachers. Over 98 percent supported the recommendations of the Civic Readiness Task Force, 89 percent of respondents support creating a +1 Civics Pathway, and 65 percent of respondents support creating a mandatory requirement for Participation in Government students to complete the Civics Capstone Project. Generation Citizen (Attachment B) submitted a white paper in support. The New York State Bar Association (Attachment C)

and Democracy Ready Youth Leadership Initiative (Attachment D) sent in letters of support.

We are at a pivotal moment in history. Our students have lived through a series of tragedies this past year as they watched brutal examples of racial injustice, a rise in discrimination and hateful rhetoric, and the disproportionate toll COVID-19 has had on our most marginalized and historically excluded communities. These events have inspired young people to become more civically engaged. Tufts University's [Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement](https://thefulcrum.us/center-for-information-and-research-on-civic-learning-and-engagement) (https://thefulcrum.us/center-for-information-and-research-on-civic-learning-and-engagement) found that nearly three times as many people ages 18 to 24 said in late 2020 that they donated to a political campaign or registered others to vote, as compared to 2018. Presidential election turnout among young people ages 18-29 reached 52-55 percent, significantly higher than the 45-48 percent turnout of 2016. However, voter rights are on the attack as states continue to pass voter suppression laws. Now is the time to address systemic racism and our long struggle for freedom and equality.

### The Seal of Civic Readiness:

The proposed Seal of Civic Readiness, modeled on the existing Seal of Biliteracy, is a formal recognition that a student has attained a high level of proficiency in terms of civic knowledge, civic skills, civic mindset, and civic experiences. The Seal of Civic Readiness distinction on a high school transcript and diploma:

- Shows the student's understanding of a commitment to participatory government; civic responsibility and civic values;
- Demonstrates to universities, colleges, and future employers that the student has completed an action project in civics or social justice; and
- Recognizes the value of civic engagement and scholarship.

In order to obtain the Seal of Civic Readiness, a student must complete all requirements for a New York State local or Regents diploma and earn a specified number of points, to be outlined in guidance issued by the Department, in two areas: Civic Knowledge and Civic Participation.

- Civic Knowledge: Students may demonstrate proficiency in civic knowledge by earning credit in Social Studies courses, receiving a passing or mastery score on a Social Studies Regents Exam, or completing a civic readiness research project.
- Civic Participation: Students may demonstrate proficiency in civic participation by completing a culminating high school civic project, completing a service learning project, achieving proficiency in a civic engagement elective course, or participating in an extra-curricular program or work-based learning experience that promotes civic engagement or civic action for a minimum of 40 hours.

Students may also earn points by completing a middle school Capstone project or a high school Capstone project.

Students may begin earning points for the Seal of Civic Readiness in Middle School. Similar to the Seal of Biliteracy, the Department proposes that the Seal of Civic Readiness would earn a school two points toward their College, Career, Civic Readiness Index (CCCRI). This enables Civic Readiness to be among the academic indicators of school quality and student success. The Department is proposing to begin a pilot program for the Seal of Civic Readiness beginning with a small sample of New York State Schools beginning in fall 2021.

#### 4 + Civic Readiness Pathway to a High School Diploma

If approved, the proposed rule would allow students who earn the Seal of Civic Readiness to apply that accomplishment toward a +1 Civic Readiness pathway to a diploma. The proposed pathway would allow students to graduate with a regular diploma when they have demonstrated the State's standards for academic achievement in math, English, science, social studies, and the State's requirements for civic readiness knowledge and skills necessary for college, career, and citizenship after high school. The Civics Readiness pathway would be added to the existing +1 pathways to a diploma that currently include STEM-Math, STEM, Science, Humanities, Arts, CTE, CDOS and World languages.

### **Summary of Proposed Amendments**

#### NYS Seal of Civic Readiness

The proposed rule amends section 100.5 of the Commissioner's regulations to establish the following:

- School district requirements for voluntary participation in the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness program:
  - School districts must submit an application for approval to the Commissioner to participate. Such application must include a narrative that describes how the district will implement the program.
  - Participating school districts must maintain appropriate records in order to identify students who have earned a NYS Seal of Civil Readiness.
  - At the end of each school year, participating school districts must submit a report to the Commissioner that includes the number of students who will receive the Seal along with relevant data.
  - Participating school districts must establish and identify a NYS Seal of Civic Readiness Committee which will identify and develop options for students to attain the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness, as well as develop a plan for tracking student progress. Additionally, the proposed rule prescribes the makeup of the committee and the duties of such committee.

- Student Criteria for the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness
  - The requirements for students to earn a NYS Seal of Civic Readiness will be:
    - to graduate with a NYS diploma; and
    - to demonstrate proficiency in both civic knowledge and civic participation. A point system leading to the Seal will be established in guidance. Students must earn points in civic knowledge and in civic participation. Students may earn points in civic knowledge by obtaining social studies credits, passing or achieving mastery on a social studies Regents Exam, or completing an approved research project. Students may earn points in civic participation by completing a culminating high school civic project, completing a service learning project, completing a middle school or high school Civics Capstone Project, achieving proficiency in a civic engagement elective course, or participating in an extra-curricular program or work-based learning experience that promotes civic engagement or civic action for a minimum of 40 hours.

#### 4+ Civic Readiness Pathway

Additionally, the proposed rule amends section 100.5 (a) and (d) of the Commissioner's regulations to add that all students, beginning in June 2022 and thereafter, could graduate with a regular high school diploma if they complete the credit requirements; meet the requirements to earn the Seal of Civic Readiness; and pass four Regents assessments, one in each of the four discipline areas of math, English, science, and social studies.

#### Next Steps

Schools that are interested in participating in the pilot for the Seal of Civic Readiness will complete the self-assessment/application and submit such to the Office of Curriculum and Instruction for approval. Schools meeting the Department's criteria will be selected to begin the pilot in September 2021. Pilot schools will be expected to provide examples of lessons and activities that will be included in the final Seal manual as exemplars for the Seal of Civic Readiness. The Department will collect information and resources from outside organizations that provide guidance on civics education during the pilot. Using the information attained from the pilot, the Department will then finalize and publish the Seal manual that will include the approved criteria for offering and attaining the Seal, along with analytical data from the pilot. Pending the success of the pilot, the Department projects that in the 2022-2023 school year, the Seal of Civic Readiness will be an option for all NYS school districts that wish to submit an application.

## **Related Regents Items**

January 2020: [Progress Update on the Civic Readiness Task Force](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/120cccrd1.pdf)  
(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/120cccrd1.pdf>)

## **Timetable for Implementation**

It is anticipated that the proposed rule will be presented to the Board of Regents for permanent adoption at the September Regents meeting, after publication of the proposed amendment in the State Register and expiration of the 60-day public comment period required under the State Administrative Procedure Act. If adopted at the September 2021 meeting, the proposed rule will become effective on September 29, 2021.

**Attachment A**

AMENDMENT TO THE REGULATIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

Pursuant to sections 101, 207, 208, 305, 308, and 309 of the Education Law.

1. The opening paragraph of subdivision (a) of section 100.5 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education is amended to read as follows:

(a) General requirements for a Regents or a local high school diploma. Except as provided in clauses (5)(i)(c), (e) and (f) of this subdivision, paragraphs (d)(6), [and] (11), and (13) and subdivision (g) of this section, the following general requirements shall apply with respect to a Regents or local high school diploma. Requirements for a diploma apply to students depending upon the year in which they first enter grade nine. A student who takes more than four years to earn a diploma is subject to the requirements that apply to the year that student first entered grade nine. Students who take less than four years to complete their diploma requirements are subject to the provisions of subdivision (e) of this section relating to accelerated graduation.

2. Subclause (1) of clause (f) of subparagraph (i) of paragraph (5) of subdivision (a) of section 100.5 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education is amended to read as follows:

(1) Except as provided in [paragraph] paragraphs (d)(11) and (13) of this section, students who first enter grade nine in September 2011 and thereafter or who are otherwise eligible to receive a high school diploma pursuant to this section in June 2015 and thereafter must meet the requirements of clauses (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) of this subparagraph and also pass any one of the following assessments:

3. Subdivision (d) of section 100.5 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education is amended by adding a new paragraph (13) to read as follows:

(13) Civics pathway. Students enrolled in high school in September 2021 and thereafter or who are otherwise eligible to receive a high school diploma pursuant to this section may meet the diploma requirements described in this section by:

(i) completing the applicable credit requirements pursuant to this section;

(ii) completing the requirements for the New York State Seal of Civic Readiness as pursuant to subdivision (i) of this section; and

(iii) passing four assessments, one in each of the four subject areas of English, mathematics, science and social studies (United States History and government or global history and geography), as set forth in clauses (a)(5)(i)(a)-(e) of this section.

4. Subdivision (i) of section 100.5 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education is relettered subdivision (j) and a new subdivision (i) is added to read as follows:

(i) New York State Seal of Civic Readiness.

(1) Purpose and Intent. The purpose of this subdivision is to establish requirements for earning a New York State (NYS) Seal of Civic Readiness. The intent of the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness is to encourage the study of civics and civility through experiential learning; certify attainment of civic readiness; provide employers with a method of identifying high school graduates with skills in civics and civility; provide universities with an additional method to recognize applicants seeking admission; prepare students with twenty-first century skills; recognize the value of K-12 Social Studies education in schools as a means to build civic knowledge; empower students as agents of positive social change to redress historical and contemporary oppression and strengthen our diverse democracy. The NYS Seal of Civic Readiness shall be awarded to students who meet

the criteria of this subdivision and complete all criteria prescribed by the Commissioner at a New York State high school approved by the commissioner to offer the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness. The NYS Seal of Civic Readiness shall be affixed to high school diplomas and transcripts of graduating pupils attaining Seal criteria. No fee shall be charged to a student pursuant to this subdivision

(2) School district requirements. School district participation in the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness program is voluntary. A school district that wishes to participate in the program shall:

(i) submit an application for approval to the commissioner, in a form and by a date prescribed by the commissioner, for the school district to participate in the program. Such application shall include a narrative that describes how the district will implement the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness program, including plans for program communications, processes pertaining to student tracking, advisement and evaluation, and timeliness and benchmarks for the program;

(ii) maintain appropriate records in order to identify students who have earned a NYS Seal of Civic Readiness. At the end of each school year in which a school district participates in the program, the school district shall submit a report to the commissioner, in a form and by a date prescribed by the commissioner, that includes the number of students receiving the Seal along with relevant data including, but not limited to the criteria chosen under subparagraph (4)(ii) and (iii) of this subdivision; and

(iii) establish and identify a NYS Seal of Civic Readiness Committee (SCRC).

(a) The SCRC shall include, but is not limited to, the following personnel:

(1) at least one Social Studies teacher;

(2) at least one School Counselor or other staff who will track student progress on earning the Seal; and

(3) at least one administrator or other staff member who will serve as the main contact with the Department in order to collect data on school offerings and submit copies of student work to the Department if requested.

(b) The SCRC shall:

(1) create a NYS Seal of Civic Readiness plan that includes, but is not limited to, details concerning, communications, student advisement, evaluation, and presentation of awards;

(2) create a master list of all available courses and extra-curricular activities pertaining to the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness program within their high school including, but not limited to dates for required benchmarks throughout the program year;

(3) develop a student tracking process, including an application process to be completed by interested students and reviewed by an advisor;

(4) review and approve potential service learning, extracurricular and work-based learning experiences, the Middle School Capstone Project if available, Civic Projects and Civics Capstone Projects in accordance with Commissioner's guidelines; and

(5) review and evaluate all coursework, assessments, and civic experiential learning completed by each student to ensure criteria for the seal are met.

(3) Student requirements.

(i) Students who wish to receive the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness shall complete all requirements for a New York State local or Regents diploma.

(ii) In addition, students shall earn points, as outlined in guidance by the Commissioner, in each of the two areas listed below:

(a) Area 1: Criteria for Demonstrating Civic Knowledge. Students may earn points, as outlined in guidance by the Commissioner, by earning credit in social studies courses, passing or receiving a mastery level score on a social studies Regents examination, or completing a civic readiness research project.

(b) Area 2: Criteria for Demonstrating Civic Participation. Students may earn points, as outlined in guidance by the Commissioner, by completing a culminating high school civic project, completing a service learning project, completing a middle school or high school Civics Capstone project, achieving proficiency in a civic engagement elective course, or participating in an extra-curricular program or work-based learning experience that promotes civic engagement or civic action for a minimum of 40 hours.