

NEWSLETTERS

[Locations](#) [Topics](#) [Connect](#) [About Us](#) [Jobs Board](#)

TEST TRACKER

As high school exit exams fall out of favor in Washington and New Jersey, New York is increasingly an outlier

BY PHILISSA CRAMER - MAY 15, 2019





Graduating students at KIPP Newark Collegiate Academy in June 2018.

f

New York's Regents exams were the first of their kind. The way things are going, one day in the not-too-distant future, they could also be the last.

SPONSOR



Washington Gov. Jay Inslee (also a Democratic candidate for president) [signed a bill doing away with that state's exit exam](#) earlier this month, leaving just 11 states that require students to pass specific tests to graduate from high school, [according to FairTest](#), a nonprofit group that advocates against high-stakes testing.

One of them is New Jersey, where Gov. Phil Murphy [campaigned on a promise](#) of doing away with that state's exit exam, which is currently [mired in legal challenges](#). (Lawmakers [heard testimony Tuesday](#) about how to resolve those challenges but are considered likely to preserve some kind of exit exam for now.)

New York requires not one but five exams, known as the Regents exams, in most cases. In recent years, policy makers have [carved out exceptions](#) for some students, but the state has seen little sustained challenge to the Regents program, despite mounting evidence that exit exams do not result in better-prepared graduates and might even increase the risk that some students drop out.

Why? Last year, the state’s top education policy maker said that the exams are part of the state’s education DNA.

“The Regents exams have been part of our core ... so that would be a challenge to sort of say, ‘Let’s get rid of Regents exams,’” Betty Rosa, chancellor of the state’s Board of Regents, told Chalkbeat.

More recently, Rosa has opened the door to a future in which Regents exams don’t stand between students and graduation. In February 2019, she [announced in a column that a state task force would study](#) whether it New York should continue to require exit exams.

You can catch up on the twisted history of New York’s high school exit exam program — from its introduction in the mid-1800s to its toughening two decades ago to the exceptions that Rosa and her colleagues have recently allowed — in [our 2018 must-read by Monica Disare](#).

***Clarification:** May 16, 2019: This story has been updated to reflect Rosa’s February 2019 comments, which appeared in an online magazine accessible to members of the New York State School Boards Association.*

By Philissa Cramer

IN THIS STORY: REGENTS EXAMS