



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

TO: The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: Beth Berlin *Elozabeth Berlin*

SUBJECT: Regents 2014-15 Budget Priorities

DATE: November 18, 2013

AUTHORIZATION(S):

J. B. J. G.
Executive Summary

Issue for Discussion

The Regents advance budget priorities every year. At the November meeting, the relevant committees will review the proposals to be advanced in 2014-15, 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 December 2013 for approval.

Reason(s) for Consideration

Regents discussion of the 2014-15 budget priorities.

Proposed Handling

Discussion of 2014-15 budget priorities.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Regents review the budget priorities as follows and make recommendations for approval at the December 2013 Full Board:

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Assessments – Reduce Testing Time | \$ 8.4 million |
| Enhancing the Achievement of English Language Learners | \$ 9.5 million |
| Online Test Delivery Pilot | \$ 4.0 million |
| Adult Education – Employment Preparation | \$ 5.0 million |
| Higher Education Opportunity Program | \$ 2.0 million |
| State Aid Modeling | \$ 2.0 million |

Additionally, the following Regents state legislative priorities have fiscal implications and should be considered in the 2014-15 State Budget deliberations:

- Mandate Relief and Flexibility
- Regional High Schools
- BOCES as Regional Leaders
- Intervention in Chronically Underperforming Schools
- Special Education Tuition Rate Setting Methodology
- TAP for Early College High School Students
- Education Equity for DREAMers
- TAP for Students with Disabilities

Timetable for Implementation

Immediate.



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Assessments - Reduce Testing Time

2014-15 BUDGET PRIORITY

The Issue:

In order to address concerns from the public regarding the amount of testing time in the classroom, the Department is requesting funds to implement state of the art printing and distribution processes for the Grades 3-8 tests. The upgrades will enable the Department to substantially reduce the number of questions that need to be field tested separately from the April test administration. As a result, the number of schools and students that will be required to participate in stand-alone field tests will also be greatly reduced.

This enhanced industry standard printing and distribution process will have the additional benefit of improved security, and therefore public confidence in the 3-8 testing program.

2014-15 Budget Request - \$8.4 million additional State Funds

- Modified Printing \$3.0m
- Increased Security Features \$1.6m
- Packaging and Distribution \$2.1m
- Storage, Collection and Support \$1.7m



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Enhancing the Achievement of English Language Learners

2014-15 BUDGET PRIORITY

The Issue:

In order to provide English Language Learners (ELLs) with the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the Common Core Standards, the Department is seeking funding to create Native Language Arts (NLA) assessments that will afford districts the option of offering this assessment when it would best measure the progress of Spanish speaking ELLs. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires all ELLs to be tested in reading/language arts in English after one year of school attendance if no NLA assessment is available. This proposal would allow Spanish speaking ELLs who have attended school in the United States for less than three consecutive years to have the flexibility to be tested in their native language in lieu of the ELA assessment. School districts could optionally continue to test such students for an additional two years in their native language if it would better allow ELLs to demonstrate their knowledge of language arts.

To fully implement and administer this flexibility, the Department is requesting additional resources to develop the NLA assessments, and for professional development of teachers and leaders and supporting instructional tools and resources.

2014-15 Budget Request - \$9.5 million additional State Funds

- \$8.0 million for new Native Language Arts Exams for grades 3-8 and for high school.
- \$500,000 for additional Department staff for administration and oversight.
- \$1.0 million for tools, resources and professional development required to use assessment results to promote effective language arts instruction.



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Online Test Delivery Pilot

2014-15 BUDGET PRIORITY

The Issue:

Currently, all Regents Exams are offered solely in a paper and pencil format. The Department is requesting funds to pilot an online test delivery system to be used in delivery of Regents Examinations. This would represent the first stages in NYSED's transition to online testing as a component of its overall strategy to use educational technology devices and connectivity to support effective instruction and student learning.

NYSED seeks funding to create an online test delivery system for a pilot of two New York State Exams. The pilot will also facilitate a readiness verification process and provide necessary training and support for schools to implement its online test delivery system.

Since this will be the first time Regents Exams will be administered using an online test delivery system, we anticipate only a segment of schools and students will initially be capable of using the online system. However, the percentage will increase over time. During the pilot, some schools and students may continue to use paper-based tests, due to lack of school capacity or individual student needs.

2014-15 Budget Request - \$4.0 million additional State Funds

- Includes the estimated costs for online system setup, conversion of test items to online format, and per student test administration fees.



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Adult Education – Employment Preparation

2014-15 BUDGET PRIORITY

The Issue:

Approximately 2.8 million out-of-school New Yorkers age 16 or older are economically at risk because they lack a high school diploma or the equivalent. Waiting lists and lotteries to gain instruction are found across 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 so today. At the same time, standards for achieving a high school equivalency (HSE) diploma are increasing as they are aligned to Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Over the next three years (2014-2016), the new HSE exam will undergo a natural and gradual transition to CCSS. The HSE exam will remain a free, state subsidized assessment in order ensure that it is not cost prohibitive for the over 50,000 adults and out-of-school youth that seek the HSE diploma each year as a gateway to college, training and employment opportunities.

The Department's budget request would provide undereducated, 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 being implemented in 2014.

2014-15 Budget Request - \$5.0 million additional State Funds



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Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP)

2014-15 BUDGET PRIORITY

The Issue:

New York State's Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) provides economically and educationally disadvantaged students with access to post-secondary institutions with services and financial support.

HEOP is currently available at 55 independent colleges and universities in NYS and provides support to over 4,900 underrepresented and disadvantaged students annually. Serving the urban, suburban, and rural disadvantaged population, HEOP candidates come from every region in the state and reflect a diverse array of students.

Since its inception in 1969, HEOP has successfully served upwards of 40,000 students throughout NYS. A recent student cohort analysis indicated a 58% HEOP graduation rate, compared with a 12% graduation rate for low-income students nationally. However, HEOP lacks adequate financial resources to ensure that additional students throughout NYS will continue to benefit from the success of this opportunity program.

The Department's budget request would allow for an expansion of HEOP student enrollment in participating post-secondary institutions.

2014-15 Budget Request - \$2.0 million additional State Funds

- \$2.0 million to expand HEOP to provide access to quality, post-secondary institutions for disadvantaged student populations



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State Aid Modeling

2014-15 BUDGET PRIORITY

The Issue:

The State Education Department (SED) oversees the modeling of over \$21 billion in state aid to public school districts annually. A critical department role is providing estimates of school aid throughout the budget process to the Executive and Legislature which involves calculating 15 or more formulas for 674 school districts using more than 2.1 million data points. The current system is highly accurate and effective but was developed more than 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.

2014-15 Budget Request - \$2.0 million additional State Funds

Development of a new State Aid Model:

SED is seeking funding to hire an outside vendor to develop a new state aid model using a more modern user interface and including enhanced reporting. The new model must meet the following business requirements

Speed: Our current model, which uses flat files, can process a set of calculations in under 5 minutes. It is expected the new model will maintain the same speed while being able to use a more modern database structure.

Flexibility: The Legislature and Executive change formulas and add new ones every year. Our model must be able to accommodate new data elements, changes to existing formulas and new formulas very quickly.

Accuracy: School Aid represents approximately 30% of the State operating funds spending. Although underlying data may change estimates, calculations must be accurate at a very precise level. Documenting changes in inputs and formulas is critical.

Reporting: We run a variety of reports and require a flexible reporting tool for the purposes of error checking and public reporting. The system must be able to quickly export data to EXCEL and other reporting packages for additional analysis.

User Interface: The model currently uses a command line editor from the 1970's to allow for user changes. The new model must feature a graphical user interface that supports drop down menus and selections.