



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

**TO:** College and Career Readiness Working Group

**FROM:** John B. King, Jr.

**SUBJECT:** Reporting of College- and Career-Ready High School Graduation Rates – Part II: Planning for the Transition (Continued)

**DATE:** November 8, 2010

**AUTHORIZATION(S):**

### **SUMMARY**

#### **Issue for Discussion**

In order to give educators more information about how effectively they are preparing their students for college and careers, does the Board of Regents wish to direct the Department to publish data for each high school and district showing what percentage of students are graduating college and career ready? If so, when should this reporting begin and what should be the basis for the graduation rate reported?

#### **Proposed Handling**

This item will come before the College and Career Readiness Working Group for discussion at its November 2010 meeting and for action at its March 2011 meeting.

#### **Background Information**

In September 2010, The P-12 Education Committee asked that a transition plan be proposed to support the publishing of college- and career-ready graduation rates. This plan needs to prepare schools and the public for several changes that will take place in graduation rate reporting in 2010-11 and 2011-12 (See Attachment A), as well as possible changes in graduation requirements. A previous version of this item was submitted to the Regents for its October 2010 meeting, but full discussion of the item did not occur because of time constraints.

## Reporting College- and Career-Ready High School Graduation Data

At its October 2010 meeting, the College and Career Readiness Working Group and P-12 Education Committee recommended that the Department and the Board of Regents engage in a sustained outreach process to gather feedback on possible revisions to graduation requirements. This may be an appropriate context in which to discuss college- and career-ready high school graduation goals.

The Department had initially proposed 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>1</sup> The Department selected this measure because:

- There is a clear consensus among admission directors in New York State's two and four year colleges that students who are well-prepared to enter college without the need for remediation score at least 75% on the English Regents examination and 80% on a Regents mathematics examination.
- These scores were used to help determine the cut scores for proficiency on the state Grades 3-8 ELA and mathematics examination.

To fulfill federal requirements, Race to the Top Scope of Work plans have been distributed to districts and charter schools and posted on the Department's website. It should be noted that these work plans include the district-wide percentage of students in the 2005 cohort after four years who have earned a score of 80 or better on their math Regents exam and 75 or better on their English Regents exam. This information is necessary for districts and charter schools to establish annual performance targets (percentage point gains) for the 2010-11 through 2013-14 school years as part of their Scope of Work for Race to the Top funding.

The information contained in the Race to the Top work plans differs from what the Department had proposed above, however, in that the work plans contain district-wide percentages calculated for all students in the cohort. In contrast, the Department's initial proposal had been to publish college- and career-ready calculations **by district and school for graduates**, which will allow a side-by-side comparison between actual graduation rates and the calculated graduation rate using a college- and career-ready standard. Using these data, schools and districts will be able to evaluate this information in combination with the grades 3-8 math and English proficiency data to better determine how effectively they are preparing students for college and careers.

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<sup>1</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.

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>2</sup>

### Recommendations and Communication Plan

With the support of the Regents, staff will continue to engage representatives of employers, parents, students, K-12 educators, postsecondary educators, and administrators in developing ideas for new graduation requirements, including the reporting of school and district progress in meeting college- and career-ready graduation rate goals.

Possible ways to encourage a statewide conversation on college- and career-readiness policy options include:

1. Convene **regional fora** and **panel discussions** around the State. The Board of Regents would convene regional fora in each of their judicial districts and conduct panel discussions in multiple Joint Management Team regions. Such conversations would provide feedback on impact, sustainability, capacity and timelines and could be complemented by systematically soliciting written input from particular stakeholder groups.
2. Conduct a **statewide survey** for use by P-12 educators, higher education and industry. The Regional Educational Laboratory or the New York Comprehensive Center might be able to assist in surveying a sample of higher education institutions or faculty.

In the context of these discussions and in advance of the release of any college- and career-ready data, the Department will reach out to stakeholders to explain that college- and career-ready graduation rate calculations are aspirational targets for information purposes only, and are intended to allow stakeholders the information necessary to predict, based on research and experience, whether students are adequately prepared to succeed in the first year of college without remediation or enter a career that requires college-level entry skills for success. During these outreach efforts, an emphasis will be placed on the fact that these aspirational targets may not predict college and/or career success for individual students, but rather should serve as general guides for goal-setting and planning.

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<sup>2</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.

At the conclusion of the public engagement process, Department staff will either:

1. Reaffirm their recommendation that the Regents direct staff to begin publicizing a college and career readiness graduation rate for all schools and districts based on the percentage of graduates passing the English language arts Regents examination with a score of at least 75% and a mathematics Regents examination with a score of 80%; or
2. Recommend that the Department begin to publicize a college and career readiness graduation rate that is aligned with any new high school graduation requirements that the Regents decide to phase in over time; or
3. Recommend that the Department not publicize at this time any additional information on college and career ready graduation rates beyond the information currently available in the Scope of Works and the annual Comprehensive Information Report that is part of the school and district report card.

If the Regents were to direct Department staff to publicize a college and career readiness graduation rate based on Option 1 above, the timeline for incorporation of college and career readiness data into the release of graduation rate information will be as follows:

#### Winter 2011

- Prompt and support a statewide conversation on college and career readiness policy options through the regional hearings, panel discussions, and statewide survey described above.

#### March 2011

- Release the graduation rate (four-year outcomes) for the 2006 cohort using the current five-month rule.
- Release college- and career-ready graduation rate calculations for the 2006 cohort using the current five-month rule.

#### Summer 2011

- Release accountability decisions based on 2010-11 school year results for the 2006 cohort (four-year outcomes) using the current five-month rule.

#### September 2011

- In order to meet the ARRA requirement that New York publicly release graduation rate results using the USDOE cohort definition, re-calculate and release the graduation rate (four-year outcomes) for the 2006 cohort using the new USDOE rules for cohort membership (one-day enrollment), transfers for incarcerated students, and grade 9 entry date for ungraded students.

## December 2011

- Release the graduation rate - five-year outcomes for the 2006 cohort and four-year outcomes for the 2007 cohort - using the new USDOE cohort definition. This will be the last time the five-month rule will be released (six-year outcomes for the 2005 cohort).
- Release college- and career-ready graduation rate calculations for the 2007 cohort using the new USDOE cohort definition.

## Summer 2012

- Release accountability decisions based on 2011-12 school year results, with flexibility that the graduation rate requirement can be met based on either the 2007 cohort (four-year outcomes) or the 2006 cohort (five-year outcomes) using the new USDOE cohort definition.

## Attachment: A: Use of New Federal Graduation Rate Cohort Definition for Reporting and Accountability

When report cards are released for 2010-11 school year results, the report cards will for the first time measure graduation rate using the United State Department of Education's (USDOE) methodology that all states must adopt for reporting purposes. In addition, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) requires that New York release graduation rate results using the new federal cohort definition by September 2011. This methodology differs from how New York currently reports results at the district and school level in that:

- Currently, students who have been enrolled in a particular school or district for fewer than five months are not counted in the cohort for school and district accountability (although we do count those students in the statewide cohort)<sup>3</sup>. This exclusion will not be permitted under the new USDOE definition.
- Currently, New York State considers all incarcerated youth as transfers and, therefore, does not include them in the cohort and does not hold schools and districts responsible for those students. The USDOE definition will only allow those incarcerated youth in programs that lead to regular high school diplomas to be considered transfers.
- Currently, New York State enters ungraded students with disabilities into a cohort based on the school year a student becomes 17 rather than when the student first becomes enrolled in a high school program. The USDOE definition will require that these students be entered into a cohort based upon when they first entered a 9<sup>th</sup> grade program, as all other students are.

Beginning with 2011-12 school year results, the USDOE graduation rate methodology must be used for accountability purposes and schools and districts must make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) with all accountability groups, not just the "All Students" group, in order to make AYP. Later this school year, consistent with policy adopted by the Board of Regents at their October 2009 meeting, staff will propose to the Regents amendments to Commissioner's regulations that will take effect for 2011-12 school year results and conform them to federal requirements, incorporate the use of a five year extended graduation rate cohort for making AYP graduation determinations, and establish new graduation rate progress targets for schools and districts.

### Planning for the Transition to the USDOE Cohort Definition

In order to allow schools time to plan for the change to this more rigorous graduation rate requirement, the USDOE cohort definition will not be used for accountability purposes until the 2011-12 school year results are reported. To allow

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<sup>3</sup> Because New York does not apply "the five-month rule" when computing the State's overall graduation rate, this state graduation rate will be largely unaffected by the change in definition. However, many schools are likely to see their individual graduation rates decline by a few percentage points, with some schools and some accountability groups within schools experiencing larger declines.

schools and districts increased flexibility to meet this new requirement, the Department will ask USDOE to allow schools and districts to meet graduation rate accountability standards based on either four- or five-year cohort results. This means that the USDOE definition must be implemented beginning with the group of students who entered grade 9 in the 2006-07 school year (the 2006 cohort).

However, the 2006 cohort will also be reported using the current cohort definition (the five-month rule) for graduation rate reporting using 2009-10 school year results and accountability reporting using 2010-11 school year results.

Therefore, results for students who entered grade 9 in 2006-07 will be reported two different ways for multiple purposes:

- 1) 2006 cohort using the five-month rule will be reported and used as follows:
  - a. Graduation rate release (four-year outcomes) in December 2010;
  - b. Accountability determinations based on 2010-11 school year results in the Summer 2011;
- 2) 2006 cohort using the USDOE definition will be reported and used as follows
  - a. Graduation rate re-calculated (four-year outcomes) to meet ARRA requirements in September 2011;
  - b. Graduation rate release (four and five-year outcomes) in December 2011;
  - c. Accountability determinations for the five year extended year graduation cohort based on 2011-12 school year results in the Summer 2012.