

Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma
CALL TO ACTION: *Act Now to Keep the Local Diploma for ALL Students*
Until Real Alternatives Exist

New York is Moving Forward and Leaving Thousands of Students Behind.

In 1996, the New York State Education Department set in motion the phase out of the local diploma in an effort to have all students fulfill the requirements for the more rigorous Regents diploma. After 15 years of phase out and a last-minute proposal to extend the local diploma only for students with disabilities,¹ **up to 14,000 general education students in New York State who still rely on the local diploma to graduate from high school will now fail to graduate this June because the local diploma will no longer be available to them.**² Most will be Black, Hispanic, English Language Learners, poor, and in large urban areas.

Maintaining the Local Diploma Only for Students with Disabilities Will Have Unintended Consequences.

The State Education Department is proposing to limit the local diploma to students with disabilities who receive special education services. A separate diploma for students with disabilities is not the answer. It will create additional incentives to over-identify students as needing special education services. In the long-term, it may lead to the devaluation of the local diploma and stigmatize the students who receive it.

It is Time to Create Multiple Pathways to a Diploma for ALL Students.

The Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma urges the State to take a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to creating alternative pathways to a high school diploma.³ We believe that any alternate pathway must:

1. Be available to all students, not just students with disabilities;
2. Not depend on the passing of high-stakes tests;
3. Lead to a regular high school diploma;
4. Allow students to specialize, including in career and technical education, and should not be one-size-fits-all;
5. Begin early and connect with middle school and lower grade curricula yet be flexible enough to benefit students who arrive in high school, change schools frequently or have interrupted education;
6. Build upon and encourage development of individual student strengths;
7. Respect student and family choice after a careful consideration of the student's individual goals and full range of options, with no student being assigned to a pathway without the informed consent of the student and his or her family; and
8. Have value to employers and colleges and make meaningful links to post-secondary opportunities and preparedness.

Until New York develops multiple pathways to a diploma, however, we cannot eliminate current options, like the local diploma, that provide real opportunities for our young people.

If you or someone you know will be affected by the elimination of the local diploma, make sure to tell your story to the State Education Department, the Regents and your legislator.

Act Now: Speak up before it's too late for the class of 2012

1. **Tell the New York State Education Department and the Board of Regents to Keep the Local Diploma Until Alternative Options are Available.**
 - Email the Commissioner of Education at jking@mail.nysed.gov, and the Deputy Commissioner of P-12 Education at kslentz@mail.nysed.gov.
 - Email the Board of Regents at RegentsOffice@mail.nysed.gov, and find the Regent who represents you here: <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/members/Membersterms0412.html>.
2. **Tell your legislator to support bill S7331, which would temporarily extend the availability of the local diploma.** Find your State legislators here: <http://nymap.elections.state.ny.us/nysboe/>.
3. **Sign our petition:** <http://www.change.org/petitions/act-now-to-keep-the-local-diploma-for-all-nys-students>.

¹ The proposal can be found here: <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2012Meetings/April2012/412p12d4.pdf>

² Estimates are based on New York State data from the 2006 high school cohort.

³ We have sent proposals to the New York State Education Department that outline specific alternative pathways to a diploma. Our letters are available on Advocates for Children's website: http://advocatesforchildren.org/policy_and_initiatives/pathways_to_a_diploma.