



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Response to State Education Department Announcement on Graduation Requirements

June 10, 2024 (NEW YORK CITY) — *Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), issued the following statement in response to the New York State Education Department (SED)'s proposal for implementing the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures, as presented at today's Board of Regents meeting:*

As an organization that has long advocated for multiple pathways to a high school diploma, we commend SED on proposing bold steps to revamp New York State's graduation framework in response to the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission. The existing system, which requires students to pass multiple Regents exams to earn a diploma, is neither equitable nor based in research; as we laid out in an [issue brief](#) last year:

- There is *no* evidence that exit exams increase student achievement, raise the value of a high school diploma in the labor market, or convey other benefits to students who pass them. As SED's own literature review noted, high-stakes exit exams are "not positively associated with any college or career outcomes" and have been found to increase high school dropout rates.
- Rather than an impartial measure of student learning, standardized tests are an unreliable gauge of graduation-readiness. Research has found that factors as arbitrary as the weather can significantly affect a student's performance on a Regents exam.
- While exit exam requirements were once popular across the country, many states have reversed course in recent years, leaving New York as one of just nine states that maintains such a policy.

Exit exam policies like New York's have caused significant harm to young people while failing to achieve their intended aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning. At AFC, we routinely work with students—many of whom have disabilities or are still learning English—who have completed their coursework but are unable to earn a high school diploma because they struggle with standardized assessments, sometimes sitting for a single exam a half-dozen times to try to raise their score by just a few points. Allowing young people to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in multiple ways, without requiring them to pass high-stakes exams, will help ensure our State's education system meets the needs of today's students. We look forward to working with SED and the Regents to build out the initial proposal presented today and ensure that all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners, get the support they need to graduate.