



October 22, 2026

New York State Education Department &
New York State Board of Regents
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Re: NY Inspires

Dear Commissioner Rosa, Chancellor Young, and Members of the Board of Regents:

On behalf of the Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma, we are writing to express our strong interest in working with you to ensure the successful implementation of NY Inspires. The Coalition has long advocated for the decoupling of Regents exams from high school graduation requirements and for all students to have access to multiple pathways by which they can demonstrate their skills, knowledge, and mastery of state standards. Exit exam policies like the system in which we have been operating have caused significant harm to young people while failing to achieve their intended aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning. This is why we support the continued work of NY Inspires.

Implementing a new system that redefines what learning and preparation for post-secondary life look like for New York students will require intentional, meaningful engagement with a variety of stakeholders; clear communication with all impacted parties about the changes; the leveraging of local expertise; and particular care and focus on students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs), and students who are over-age and under-credited. To that end, we wanted to share several recommendations as you work on the implementation process with the needs of students, families, and school communities in mind. Our suggestions are intended to strengthen implementation, not delay it.

- **Stakeholder engagement:** We urge you to ensure there are meaningful opportunities for feedback from current and recent students, parents, educators, researchers, advocates, higher education institutions, and employers. This must include individuals with experience with students with disabilities, ELLs, and over-age and under-credited students, as well as individuals with expertise in the development and implementation of work-based learning, career and technical education, and performance-based assessment systems. We appreciate the steps NYSED has taken over the years to engage in outreach regarding graduation measures – such as the town halls held several years ago – and think it is essential to build upon these efforts as NY Inspires moves forward.

- **Clear communication about changes:** Students, families, educators, and school leaders need information in a language and mode they can access about the changes occurring, how such changes will impact them and their school communities, and what students need to do to graduate. NYSED should provide, or enable local school districts to provide, information in a timely manner, giving students, families, and educators time to plan and adjust as necessary.
- **Leverage local expertise:** Schools and educators across New York—including members of our coalition—are already using performance-based assessments, work-based or career connected learning, and other methods that provide students with opportunities to develop and demonstrate skills included in the Portrait of a Graduate, without reliance on high-stakes standardized tests. We strongly urge NYSED to leverage the expertise that already exists in the State as you work to roll out NY Inspires.
- **Focus particular attention on students with disabilities and English Language Learners:** The success of NY Inspires should be measured, in part, by whether *all* students, including students with disabilities and ELLs, can fully access and benefit from all aspects of the initiative. Unfortunately, over the years, we have seen too many new programs and processes rolled out in various parts of the State without adequate consideration of the supports these student groups need to access and meaningfully participate in them. For example, students with disabilities and ELLs have faced barriers to participation in certain work-based learning programs. As NYSED implements NY Inspires, it must ensure that students with disabilities and ELLs have the support and accommodations they need to participate in all pathways, meet learning standards, and demonstrate their knowledge and skills. We strongly urge NYSED to anticipate and proactively address potential gaps and to ensure that districts and schools have the resources, guidance, technical assistance, and ongoing support needed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities and ELLs and accurately assess their readiness to graduate. We also want to ensure there is attention on students served by BOCES who come from multiple home districts.

Additionally, as the State moves away from requiring students to pass Regents exams in order to graduate, we want to ensure that this shift does not result in *more* high-stakes testing, as was implied by the mention of high school ESSA assessments in addition to Regents exams during the September Board of Regents meeting. While having a robust accountability system is essential, it would be difficult for NY Inspires to transform teaching and learning if schools were required to devote even more time to preparing students for and administering State exams. As such, we caution against adding requirements for additional standardized high-stakes testing, including through adjustments to ESSA accountability.



Thank you for your commitment to creating a more equitable graduation framework that meets the needs of today's students. We stand ready to work with you to ensure implementation is effective for all students, including students with disabilities, ELLs, and over-age and under-credited students. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these recommendations and how our coalition can help support successful implementation across New York State.

Respectfully,
Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma