

**Part I:**

***Overview***

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# 1 Overview of the Report

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In July 1996, the Board of Regents adopted standards that define what students should know and be able to do as they progress through grades K-12 in New York State schools. These higher standards are necessary to prepare our children to compete successfully in today's demanding global society. Under New York's revised learning standards, students will develop their problem-solving abilities and learn to think independently. Our children will be better equipped to use their knowledge of all subject areas to solve real-life problems and to handle real work situations. They will also be expected to become competent in the visual and performing arts.

These standards focus on seven curriculum areas: English language arts; mathematics, science and technology; social studies; languages other than English; the arts; health, physical education, and family and consumer sciences; and career development and occupational studies. All children are expected to acquire a working knowledge of each area and develop proficiency in applying that knowledge to meaningful tasks.

Defining higher standards is one step in the Regents strategy for raising standards for all students. The strategy includes three elements:

1. set clear, high expectations/standards for all students and develop an effective means of assessing student progress in meeting the standards;
2. build the capacity of schools and districts to enable all students to meet standards; and
3. use and expand the existing systems of public accountability for schools, based on student performance, and provide incentives for improving effectiveness and sanctions for low performance.

This strategy builds on the Regents previous school improvement initiatives: the 1984 *Action Plan to Improve Elementary and Secondary Education Results in New York* and *A New Compact for Learning*. The *Action Plan* raised graduation requirements for all students; the *Compact*, endorsed by educators, public officers, business leaders, parents, and students, provided a comprehensive plan for school reform in New York State.

## ***New York State Education Department Mission***

*To raise the knowledge, skill, and opportunity of all the people in New York*

### ***Regents Goals***

1. *All students will meet high standards for academic performance and personal behavior and demonstrate the knowledge and skills required by a dynamic world.*
2. *All educational institutions will meet Regents high performance standards.*
3. *The public will be served by qualified, ethical professionals who remain current with best practice in their fields and reflect the diversity of New York State.*
4. *Education, information, and cultural resources will be available and accessible to all people.*
5. *Resources under our care will be used or maintained in the public interest.*
6. *Our work environment will meet high standards.*

The Regents strategic plan, *Leadership and Learning*, establishes goals for the State of New York and strategies for implementing these goals. This report provides indicators of performance to inform us about our progress in achieving these goals.

This report, like previous reports, documents wide variations in student achievement among districts in New York State. These variations are associated with differences in the social and economic context within which districts operate. Inappropriate educational experiences in any one of the three domains contributing to education — school, family, and community — may result in a child being educationally disadvantaged. Five indicators, each associated with poor school performance, are useful for identifying students at risk of educational disadvantage: living in a poverty household, minority racial/ethnic group identity, living in a single-parent family, having a poorly educated mother, and having a non-English language background.<sup>1</sup>

Not all students having one or more of these characteristics are educationally disadvantaged; many families provide supportive environments in the face of challenges. Many disadvantaged children, however, experience a mismatch between the skills they learn at home and in the community and the expectations of traditional schools. This mismatch places them at risk of school failure. When families are characterized by several indicators of educational disadvantage, their children's risk of school failure multiplies. Being born to a single

mother, minority parents, or undereducated parents, for example, substantially increases the likelihood that a child will live in poverty.<sup>2</sup> Further, poor and minority children too often experience low levels of school and community support for educational achievement and thus are placed at risk in all three domains.

The 2000 Census indicates that 32.7 percent of 5-to-17-year-olds spoke English less than “very well.” In 1999, 19.1 percent of 5-to-17-year-olds were in poverty status. Thirty-nine percent of families with a female householder with related children under 18 and no husband present were in poverty status.

Some districts have disproportionate numbers of children who are at risk of being educationally disadvantaged. These children are more likely than others to do poorly in school. This result, however, is not inevitable. All children can learn given appropriate instructional, social, and health services. The fact that so many children are not learning attests to the failure of one or more domains to provide essential services and experiences. Consequently, this report describes not only the differences among schools in student achievement but also differences in demographic characteristics (including the three indicators for which statistics are available) and in fiscal and personnel resources. These analyses reveal that those children who are most at risk of school failure receive fewer resources than their more advantaged peers.

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<sup>1</sup> Aaron M. Pallas, Gary Natriello, and Edward L. McDill, “The Changing Nature of the Disadvantaged Population: Current Dimensions and Future Trends,” *Educational Researcher* 18 (June-July 1989): 16-22.

<sup>2</sup> Clifford M. Johnson, Andrew M. Sum, and James D. Weill, *Vanishing Dreams: The Economic Plight of America's Young Families* (Washington, D. C.: Children's Defense Fund, 1992).

## 2 Graduation Requirements

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Since 1984, the Regents have acted three times to raise high school graduation requirements. In 1984, the Regents Action Plan increased course and testing requirements for both local and Regents-endorsed diplomas. Before this plan was enacted, Commissioner's Regulations required all students to demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics. Changes to Commissioner's Regulations in 1984 required all students also to demonstrate proficiency in global studies, U.S. history and government, and science. Beginning with the graduating class of 1989, students have been subject to the rigorous requirements of the Regents Action Plan for both local and Regents-endorsed diplomas.

In 1996, the Board of Regents acted to phase out the Regents competency tests (RCTs), alternatives to Regents examinations for demonstrating minimal competency. Beginning with students who entered ninth grade in 1996, all students not eligible for the RCT safety net described below must score 55 or higher, with local board of education approval, on the Regents Comprehensive Examination in English to earn a local diploma.

Each successive class of ninth-graders was required to score 55 or higher on one or more additional Regents examinations. Students who entered ninth grade in 1999 were required to score 55 or higher on Regents examinations in five subject areas. To earn a Regents diploma, students must score 65 or higher on the Regents examinations required for their grade 9 entering class.

In 1997, the Board of Regents established still more rigorous course requirements for students, beginning with those who entered ninth grade in the 2001–02 school year. The graduation requirements are outlined in the accompanying tables.

To provide additional time for districts to prepare students with disabilities to meet the higher graduation standards, the Regents have adopted a safety net for these students. The RCT safety net requires that eligible students prepare for and take five Regents examinations but allows those unable to pass one or more Regents examinations to earn a local diploma by passing the corresponding RCT(s). The RCT safety net is available to eligible students entering grade 9 from September 1996 through September 2009.

# New York State High School Graduation Requirements

## Course Requirements

Subject Areas	Students Entering Grade 9 Prior to September 2001		Students Entering Grade 9 in September 2001 and Thereafter	
	Local Diploma	Regents Diploma	Regents Diploma	Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation
English	4	4	4	4
Social Studies	4	4	4	4
Mathematics	2	2	3	3
Science	2	2	3	3
Second Language	0	3 <sup>2</sup>	1	3 <sup>3</sup>
Arts	1	1	1	1
Health	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Physical Education	2	2	2	2
Units in Core	15.5 <sup>1</sup>	18.5 <sup>1</sup>	18.5	20.5
Total Units Required	20.5	20.5	22	22

<sup>1</sup> Students must also complete a three-unit sequence in two of the following areas: career and technical education, mathematics, science, the arts, or a second language. As an alternative to completing two three-unit sequences, students may complete one five-unit sequence in any of the above areas or one three-unit sequence and a fifth unit of English or social studies.

<sup>2</sup> Students completing a sequence of not less than five units of credit in career and technical education or the arts may substitute another three-unit or five-unit sequence in place of the three units in a second language.

<sup>3</sup> To earn the advanced designation, students must complete one of the following: three units of credit in a second language; or five units of credit in career and technical education plus one unit of credit in a second language; or five units of credit in the arts plus one unit of credit in a second language.

## Testing Requirements

Students Entering Grade 9:	Prior to 2010	Prior to 2005	Prior to 2001	2001 and Thereafter	2001 and Thereafter
Type of Diploma:	Local Diploma <sup>4</sup>	Local Diploma <sup>5</sup>	Regents Diploma	Regents Diploma	Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation
Score Range Student Must Achieve:	Pass	55–64	65–100	65–100	65–100
Examinations:	RCT Reading & RCT Writing	Regents English	Regents English	Regents English	Regents English
	RCT Mathematics	One Regents Mathematics	Two Regents Mathematics	One Regents Mathematics	Two Regents Mathematics
	RCT Science	One Regents Science	Two Regents Science	One Regents Science	Two Regents Science
	RCT Global Studies	Regents Global History & Geography	Regents Global History & Geography	Regents Global History & Geography	Regents Global History & Geography
	RCT U.S. History & Government	Regents U.S. History & Government	Regents U.S. History & Government	Regents U.S. History & Government	Regents U.S. History & Government
			Regents Second Language <sup>6</sup>		Regents Second Language <sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The option of using RCTs to fulfill the testing requirement for a local diploma is only available to students with disabilities who have taken and failed the relevant Regents examination at least once.

<sup>5</sup> Students who enter grade 9 prior to 2005 may fulfill the testing requirement for a local diploma by scoring 55–64 on Regents examinations, but only if this option is approved by the district board of education. General-education students who enter grade 9 in 2005 or thereafter cannot fulfill the testing requirement for or earn a local diploma by scoring 55–64 on Regents examinations.

<sup>6</sup> Students completing a five-unit sequence in career and technical education or in the arts, in addition to another three-unit sequence, do not have to meet this testing requirement.

## 3 Overview of State Testing Program

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In New York State, the primary measures of student and school performance in the elementary and middle grades in 2002–03 were the New York State Assessment Program (NYSAP) in English language arts and mathematics, the grades 4 and 8 science tests, and the grades 5 and 8 social studies tests. The Regents examinations and the Regents competency tests (RCTs) are the primary measures in the secondary grades. This section describes these examination programs. Performance in these programs is discussed in the remaining chapters.

### New York State Assessment Program

In the 1998–99 school year, new English language arts (ELA) and mathematics tests, reflecting the elementary- and middle-level learning standards, were administered for the first time. These tests, which are administered in grades 4 and 8, assess a broad range of achievement levels from severely deficient to advanced. They provide a standardized measure to assess whether students are proficient in the standards for their grade level. Commissioner’s Regulations require that schools evaluate students scoring at Level 1 or 2 to determine whether academic intervention services are required.

Performance on these criterion-referenced tests is measured on equal-interval scales, each covering 300 to 365 points. Each scale is divided into four performance levels. The scale score ranges associated with each performance level are

shown below. Students scoring at Level 1, the lowest, have serious academic deficiencies and show little or no proficiency in the standards for their grade level. Students at this level need extensive academic intervention services to reach the standards. Students at Level 2 show some knowledge and skill in each of the required standards for elementary- or middle-level students but need extra help to reach all of the standards and pass the Regents examinations. Students at Level 3 meet the standards and, with continued steady growth, should pass the Regents examination in the assessed area. Students at Level 4, the highest level, exceed the standards and are moving toward high performance on the Regents examination.

### Elementary- and Middle-Level Science and Social Studies Tests

The Regents Action Plan mandated the creation of tests to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs in elementary-level science and elementary- and middle-level social studies. While the program evaluation tests were designed to evaluate programs, performance on them depended on student ability and motivation as well as program effectiveness. The elementary-level program evaluation test in social studies was administered for the first time in May 1987; the other two program evaluation tests were introduced in May 1989. Since scores were used to evaluate programs rather than to identify students in need of academic intervention services, no State reference points were established.

### 2002–03 Scale Score Ranges for Performance Levels New York State Assessment Program

Assessment	Scale Score Ranges			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Elementary-Level ELA	455–602	603–644	645–691	692–800
Elementary-Level Mathematics	448–601	602–636	637–677	678–810
Middle-Level ELA	527–657	658–696	697–736	737–830
Middle-Level Mathematics	517–680	681–715	716–759	760–882

Elementary- and middle-level tests have been revised to reflect the new standards in science and social studies. The revised grade 4 science test, first administered in May 2000, is the only test at the elementary or middle level that continues to be a program evaluation test through the 2002–03 school year. All others are pupil evaluation tests. However, the grade 4 science test also includes a student evaluation component designed to determine whether individual students have achieved the standards expected in this curricular area. Schools must provide academic intervention services to students scoring below the required level on this test to ensure that they reach the graduation standards.

The grade 5 social studies test was administered for the first time in November 2001. The grade 8 science and social studies tests were administered for the first time in spring 2001. These tests are designed to determine whether individual students have achieved the standards expected in these curricular areas. Schools must provide academic intervention services to students scoring below the required level on any of these tests to ensure that they reach the graduation standards. Schools reported scores for these tests to the State for the first time for the 2001–02 school year.

## Regents Examinations

For more than a century, Regents examinations have been an important component of high school education in New York State. In 2002–03, the Regents examinations were provided in 15 subjects, and more than 1.5 million examinations are administered annually.

Regents examinations serve several purposes: chief among them are to measure the commencement-level standards established by the Regents and to motivate student achievement. Each examination is based on a State syllabus or core curriculum. Caution must be exercised in assessing year-to-year changes in examination results, because their content changes periodically as new course syllabi are developed and approved. The difficulty of examinations is maintained at a constant level by pretesting and field testing items, equating forms, and standard setting.

Student success on the Regents examinations is an important indicator of secondary school quality. In 1996, the Regents acted to raise standards by phasing in requirements that students demonstrate proficiency for graduation by passing Regents examinations rather than the less rigorous RCTs. Phasing out the RCTs shifts the attention and effort of students to the Regents examinations and the higher standards that they measure.

All students who entered ninth grade in fall 1996 were required to score 55 or higher on the Regents comprehensive examination in English to satisfy the testing requirement for a local diploma. The number of Regents examinations students were required to score 55 or higher on to satisfy the graduation testing requirement increased with each succeeding cohort of students entering grade 9: mathematics was added in fall 1997, global history and geography and U.S. history and government in fall 1998, and science in fall 1999. Students who enter ninth grade between 1996 and 2004 can satisfy the testing requirement for a local diploma by attaining a score of 55–64 on a Regents examination (if approved by their district), but they need a minimum score of 65 to satisfy the testing requirement for a Regents-endorsed diploma. The local diploma will not be available to general-education students who enter grade 9 in the 2005–06 school year and thereafter. Students entering grade 9 in 2005–06 must score 65 or higher on all five required Regents examinations to satisfy the testing requirements for a Regents diploma.

Schools vary both in the percentage of their student enrollment who participate in Regents examinations and in the percentage of tested students who pass. Regents examination performance is reported in two ways. Performance on the Regents examinations in English, mathematics, U.S. history and government, global history and geography, and science, which are required for graduation by students who first entered grade 9 in 1999, is reported as a percentage of students tested. Regents English and mathematics examination results are also presented as a percentage of the 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999 cohorts. Performance on Regents examinations in global history and geography and U. S. history and government is reported

as a percentage of the 1998 and 1999 cohorts; performance on Regents examinations in science is reported as a percentage of the 1999 cohort.

## Regents Competency Tests

Revisions to the Commissioner's Regulations that went into effect in 1984 required that all students demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, mathematics, science, global studies, and U.S. history and government to fulfill the testing requirement for a local diploma. (Before this plan was enacted, Commissioner's Regulations required all students to demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics only.) The Regents competency tests (RCTs) were established as a mechanism for students not participating in Regents courses and examinations to demonstrate competency through criterion-referenced tests. The current Commissioner's Regulations require that students scoring below the designated performance levels on elementary-, intermediate-, and com-

mencement-level State assessments in English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science, be provided appropriate academic intervention services.

Beginning with the class entering ninth grade in 2005, general-education students will be required to demonstrate proficiency for graduation in all areas by scoring 65 or above on Regents examinations. Students with disabilities who enter ninth grade prior to September 2010 may continue to use RCTs to demonstrate competency but only if they fail one or more Regents examinations.

Differences in RCT performance across schools and test administrations should be interpreted with caution, because the population of test-takers changes as higher State graduation requirements are implemented. As more students have been required to take Regents courses and examinations, the pool of students taking the RCTs became smaller and less able, depressing the percentage of students passing several RCTs.

# 4 Organization of the Report

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This report is organized in two volumes, the *Statewide Profile of the Educational System* and the *Statistical Profiles of Public School Districts*. The *Statewide Profile* is organized primarily by content area (listed in the Table of Contents on page xi).

## Summary Groups

The *Statewide Profile* provides summary information for the State as a whole, for schools in the public and nonpublic sectors, and for major groups of public schools. Within the public sector, these groups are:

- New York City public schools;
- Large City Districts (Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers); and
- Districts Excluding the Big 5 (districts outside New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers).

In some cases, only two groups are used:

- New York City; and
- Rest of State Districts (the State excluding New York City).

These groups of schools are diverse in terms of student and teacher demographics, resources, and performance. Smaller, more homogeneous groups of schools best illustrate the relationships that exist among poverty, minority status, resources, and performance. For this purpose, three additional methods of classifying public schools (by need/resource capacity, by minority composition or race/ethnicity, and by schools under registration review) and two additional methods of classifying nonpublic schools (New York City and the rest of the State, excluding New York City) are used in the report.

***Need/Resource Capacity Categories.*** The need/resource capacity index was developed by assessing each school district's special student needs and ability to provide resources relative to the State average. This classification scheme more clearly indicates where in the State system some children are failing because they have not been provided the resources necessary to succeed. In particular, it recognizes that certain districts in addition to the Big 5 — whether small city, suburban, or rural — serve extraordinarily large numbers of educationally disadvantaged children who have not been given full opportunity to learn and succeed. Definitions of, and information about, need/resource capacity categories are found in *Part IV: Student Needs and School Resources*.

***Minority Composition Categories.*** Chapter 655 legislation mandates that data in this report be aggregated by race/ethnicity when possible. Where data by racial/ethnic group are not available, such as attendance and teacher data, schools are classified based on the percentage of minority students enrolled. This classification scheme is useful for illustrating disparities between low- and high-minority schools in student family income and school resources. Performance, dropout, and graduation data are available by race/ethnicity.

These classification schemes — minority composition category and need/resource capacity category — form groups of similar public schools to illustrate the relationships among demographics, resources, and performance. Other methods of classifying schools (poverty status and attendance rate) and students (race/ethnicity and gender) are used, as necessary, to illuminate the relationships between these factors and performance or resources.

**Nonpublic Schools.** Information on nonpublic schools statewide can be found in *Part VII: Nonpublic Schools*. Available data for nonpublic schools are reported aggregated to the State level, and for New York City nonpublic schools and nonpublic schools outside New York City. Statistics on nonpublic schools are available for enrollment, student demographic characteristics (such as racial/ethnic group enrollment and poverty), performance, and high school completion.

**Schools Under Registration Review.** Data are provided in the *Statewide Profile* for one additional group of public schools: Schools Under Registration Review (SURR) during the 2002–03 school year. Beginning in 1996–97, schools farthest from State performance standards were identified for registration review if they were determined to be most in need of improvement. In May 2000, the Regents established accountability standards based on the following measures: NYSAP in English language arts and mathematics; completing graduation requirements in English language arts and mathematics; and dropout rate (which was replaced by graduation rate in 2002–03). Appendix B provides statistics on SURR schools comparable to those for all public schools.

## School District Data

*Statistical Profiles of Public School Districts* (the second volume) reports a wide range of data for each of the State’s public school districts. The *Statistical Profiles* begins with a glossary that defines the measures presented and refers readers to the chapter in the *Statewide Profile* where additional information on each data element can be found.

In the 2004 report, the district data are organized into 17 tables. Table 1 reports enrollment; student demographics; attendance, dropout, and suspension rates; college-going rate; and student/staff ratios. Table 2 presents school finance

data, including district expenditures for general and special education. Table 3 reports data on class size and teacher characteristics. Table 4 presents information on special-education classification, placement, and exiting status. Table 5 presents performance on the State elementary- and middle-level English language arts and mathematics assessments. Table 6 reports performance on the State assessments in elementary- and middle-level science. Table 7 reports performance on the State assessments in elementary- and middle-level social studies and Regents diploma data. Tables 8 through 12 report Regents examination performance. Table 13 presents 1999 cohort data for the Regents English and mathematics examinations results. Table 14 presents 1999 cohort data for the Regents examinations in global history and geography, U.S. history and government, and science. Table 15 reports results on Regents competency tests. Table 16 presents results on second language proficiency examinations and the Introduction to Occupations examination. Finally, Table 17 provides information on the universal prekindergarten program. For the reader’s convenience, summary tables (beginning on page 1) report aggregate statistics for each measure for all public schools, for each public school need/resource capacity category, for all nonpublic schools, and for all schools (public and nonpublic) combined. These summary data are provided for the school years 2000–01 to 2002–03.

For the convenience of districts and organizations that would like to perform statistical analyses, the district-level data in the 17 tables are available in a set of electronic computer files. For the benefit of analysts, a glossary is provided with the files. Information about obtaining these files can be obtained by calling (518) 474-7965. These data and comparable school-level data can also be viewed on the Department’s Information and Reporting Services Web site: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts>.