




Deputy Commissioner
Office of Curriculum, Assessment and Educational Technology

February 12, 2014

To: BOCES District Superintendents
Superintendents of Public Schools
Principals of Public and Nonpublic Schools
Charter School Leaders

From: Ken Wagner 

Subject: Common Core Learning Standards and Assessments

At the February meeting of the Board of Regents, a Work Group of the Board presented 19 options to improve the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards at the State and district level in a Report entitled *The Path Forward: Common Core Learning Standards, Assessments, and Teacher & Principal Evaluation in New York State*.¹

The Board of Regents reaffirmed its commitment to the Common Core Learning Standards. Student progress on these standards will be assessed in the spring through the Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics State assessments. In addition, student progress on Common Core Learning Standards will be assessed beginning in June 2014 on the Common Core Regents Exam in Algebra I and in ELA, in accordance with the previously posted phase-in schedule.²

Please be aware that, even though the Common Core Regents Exam in ELA will be available beginning in June 2014, no one is required to pass this Common Core exam until the students who first entered grade 9 in the 2013-14 school year graduate in June 2017 (these students would typically take the exam in their junior year – 2016). Students who first entered grade 9 prior to the 2013-14 school year will continue to be able to take the old Regents Comprehensive Exam in English (2005 Learning Standards) through its last administration in August 2016.

Although comprehensive field guidance will be shared as the various components of the Regents' Work Group Report are finalized and implemented, this memo addresses three adjustments that are relevant to the State assessments component of the Report.

¹ The full Work Group Report is posted at <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2014/February2014/214p12hea3.pdf>. Additional detail can be found at <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2014/February2014/214monthmat.html#p12heam>.

² See <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/commoncore/transitionccregents1113rev.pdf>.

1. Full Common Core Implementation Delayed to 2022 (Report Adjustment Recommendation 3)

Since 2010, the Department has posted graduation rate data that included the percent of students in a high school cohort who graduated and scored 65 or greater on the ELA and a math Regents Exam, as well as the percent of students in a cohort who graduated and scored at an aspirational college- and career-readiness level of 75 and 80 on the ELA and a math Regents Exam, respectively.

Similarly, with the rollout of the Common Core Regents Exams in ELA and in Algebra I beginning in June 2014, the Board indicated its intent to maintain a zero to 100 point scale and two different cut scores:

- 65 (indicating partial mastery of the standards and sufficient for graduation purposes), and
- an aspirational college- and career-readiness score (comparable to the existing 75/80) that indicates the student met Common Core course-level expectations aligned to college- and career-readiness.

These two different cut scores for graduation purposes vs. aspirational purposes will be recommended to the Commissioner and Board of Regents by a panel of educators from across the state through a formal process known as “standard setting.” These two different cut scores will help ensure that the percentage of students who graduate from high school remains stable as we implement the Common Core Learning Standards.

The Regent’s Adjustment Recommendation 3 reflects the intent to phase in over time the graduation requirement to demonstrate proficiency on the Common Core standards in high school courses. Specifically, the class of 2022 (i.e., students who first enter grade 9 in the 2018-19 school year) would be the first group of students required to pass Common Core Regents Exams (ELA and one exam in math) at the aspirational college- and career-readiness level (comparable to the existing 75/80), indicating that they met Common Core course-level expectations (see <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2014/February2014/214p12d4.pdf>).

Therefore, the full implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards would be delayed to the class of 2022. Prior to 2022, graduating students would not be required to demonstrate this level of mastery on Common Core Regents Exams. ***This adjustment does not change the date of first availability of Common Core Regents Exams or the requirement that New York students be enrolled in courses with instructional and learning experiences aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards.***

2. Geometry (Report Adjustment Recommendation 3)

The Board of Regents indicated its intent to offer one year of flexibility for the Common Core Regents Exam in Geometry, similar to the flexibility offered this year for the first administrations of the Common Core Regents Exams in Algebra I and in ELA

(see <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2014/February2014/214P12d3.pdf>).

During this period, students, at local discretion, would be able to take the old Regents Exam in Geometry (2005 Learning Standards) in addition to the new Common Core Regents Exam in Geometry and have the higher score count for local transcript and other purposes.

However, since this flexibility involves an overlap of learning standards as well as assessments, the overlap option will be available for the first year of the test administration only – this year for the Common Core Regents Exams in Algebra I (June 2014, August 2014, and January 2015 administrations) and ELA (January 2014, June 2014, and August 2014 administrations) and next year for the Common Core Regents Exam in Geometry (June 2015, August 2015, and January 2016). It is anticipated that a regulatory amendment regarding Geometry flexibility will be presented to the Board for adoption at the April meeting. If the regulation is adopted, the transition memo posted at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/commoncore/transitionccregents1113rev.pdf> will be updated to reflect this change.

3. Clarify What Grades 3-8 test Scores Mean For Students (Report Adjustment Recommendation 9)

Finally, the Work Group Report and the corresponding Regents item (see <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2014/February2014/214p12d5.pdf>) makes explicit that students who achieve at a Level 2 on the Grades 3-8 ELA or math tests have not “failed,” but rather have attained a level of proficiency that corresponds to the current requirement to pass a Regents Exam at a score of 65 for graduation purposes (students are “On Track for Regents Exam Passing for Graduation”). Although students who score at a Level 2 will need additional support in both general instruction and, where applicable, Academic Intervention Services if they are to score at the aspirational performance level on a Common Core Regents Exam, this level of performance would not be required for graduation until the class of 2022, as described above.

Finally, please note that the Regent’s Work Group Report discussed several initiatives to support the implementation of the Common Core, including the periodic review and update of the standards (Report Adjustment Recommendation 1), increased funding and professional development (Report Adjustment Recommendation 2), and additional support for English language learners and students with disabilities (Report Adjustment Recommendations 16, 18, and 19). Additionally, the Department will release the Common Core Regents Exams in ELA and Algebra I in their entirety after the first administration in June 2014 and issue the Educator Guide to the Common Core Regents Examination in Geometry in May 2014 to help facilitate professional development.

Thank you for your continued support with this important and challenging work.