



Senior Deputy Commissioner
Office of Education Policy

April 13, 2021

To: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Schools
Principals of Public Schools
Leaders of Charter Schools

From: John L. D'Agati 

Subject: Providing Over-Age Students the Opportunity to Return to School in the 2021-22 School Year Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

As you know, the Board of Regents and the State Education Department have made a number of temporary regulatory changes to minimize the educational impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the students of New York State. This has resulted in the need to modify the requirements that students must meet in order to earn high school diplomas, credentials, and endorsements.

While COVID-19 has impacted all of us, it has been particularly harmful to vulnerable populations, including most importantly, English language learners, economically disadvantaged and homeless students, and students with disabilities. Again, this school year, this problem is greatly compounded for those students who will “age out” of the P-12 education system because they have turned 21 years old by the start of school in September 2021.

Many plans for this school year were again placed on hold or interrupted due to the constantly changing health and safety conditions and the need to transition between remote, hybrid and in-person instruction. As we experienced last school year, these changes to our educational system disrupt learning leaving some students without the high levels of support and planning they need to effectively transition from high school to their postsecondary plans. Through no fault of their own, many of these students now risk losing the opportunity to earn a high school diploma when they age out of the system at the end of the 2020-2021-school year. That is an unfair and unjust result for our students who can least afford to lose this life-changing opportunity to earn a diploma, credential, or endorsement.

To ensure that 21-year-old students have the chance to earn their high school diploma and fully prepare for the transition to their planned postsecondary experiences, the Board of Regents and the State Education Department are strongly encouraging schools and school districts to allow those students who will age out of school the opportunity to return for summer school and, if necessary, attend school in the 2021-2022 school year, in order to complete their education and earn a diploma, credential, or endorsement.

We must do everything possible to continue to support our most vulnerable students and their families through these incredibly challenging times. As we stressed to you last school year, giving these young adults that have worked so hard for so long the opportunity to complete their schooling and transition to the next step in their lives will benefit them, their families, and the communities in which they live and work – this is what they deserve and again we urge you to offer them this opportunity.