




Senior Deputy Commissioner
Office of Education Policy

June 18, 2020

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 2020-21 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 harm to New York's students as a result of the closing of schools and the abrupt move to remote instruction this year. Specifically, we cancelled the June 2020 administration of Regents exams and modified 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 especially English language learners, economically disadvantaged and homeless students, and students with disabilities. The 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 2020.

Many plans for the final quarter of school were placed on hold this year, leaving some students without the high levels of support and planning they needed to effectively transition from high school to their postsecondary plans. Through no fault of their own, 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 2019-20 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 previously planned postsecondary experiences, the Board of Regents and the Education Department are strongly encouraging schools and school districts to allow those students who will age out of school the opportunity – for this year only – to return for summer school and, if necessary, attend school in the 2020-2021 year, in order to complete their education and earn a diploma.

We must do everything possible to support our most vulnerable students and their families through these incredibly challenging times. It would be a cruel injustice to pull the rug out from under these young adults who have worked so hard for so long. Giving them the opportunity to complete their schooling, earn a diploma, and transition to the next step in their lives will benefit them, their families, and the communities in which they live and work – and we urge you to offer them that opportunity.