



# Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures

NOVEMBER 13, 2023

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**A MESSAGE FROM NEW YORK STATE BOARD OF REGENTS CHANCELLOR LESTER W. YOUNG, JR  
AND STATE EDUCATION COMMISSIONER BETTY A. ROSA**

In 2019, the Board of Regents created a Blue Ribbon Commission to examine and rethink New York’s graduation requirements. Under the direction of the Commission’s co-chairs, Vice Chancellor Josephine Victoria Finn and Regent Judith Chin, a diverse cross-section of stakeholders, including educators, administrators, researchers, school counselors, professionals from business and higher education, parents, and students, undertook an independent, thoughtful, and inclusive process to explore what a state diploma should signify to ensure educational excellence and equity for every student in New York State.

Prior to entering into this process, we knew the current system wasn’t working for all students. The intent of this initiative was never to lower standards; to the contrary, it focused on placing all New York State students on a success trajectory by providing them access to the necessary opportunities and supports they need.

The Commission’s ultimate recommendations culminate from a robust stakeholder input process and an extensive review of relevant research, literature, and experience. Thanks to the voices of all those involved, we have a roadmap for learning-centered education that best meets the needs of every student in New York State. It incorporates competency imperatives that provide them the practical skills needed for the dynamic demands of tomorrow’s workforce. The following Report reflects a deliberate and comprehensive process designed to empower all New York State students, allowing them to demonstrate what they’ve learned in a meaningful way and ensuring their success as they prepare for college, career, and civic life.

This Report is the result of extensive efforts and invaluable input from many individuals. We are grateful to the co-chairs and members of the Blue Ribbon Commission for their tireless work on this endeavor. They have conducted this work honorably, engaging in a trusting dialogue while respecting the views of all. We appreciate the thoughtful, insightful, and informed recommendations provided by the Commission.

We are truly indebted to our New York State Education Department team who guided the Commission throughout this process and organized the logistics that produced the final Report. We sincerely thank the Region 2 Comprehensive Center, led by WestEd, for their literature review, a state and international policy scan, and a summary of stakeholder feedback, and All4Ed for their guidance and assistance at the July convening. Finally, we thank our stakeholders, including students, parents, community members, educators, administrators, school counselors, and professionals from business and higher education, who took the time to provide invaluable feedback to inform the work of the Commission.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Betty A. Rosa".

Betty A. Rosa  
**Commissioner**



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lester W. Young, Jr.".

Lester W. Young, Jr.  
**Chancellor**

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# Executive Summary

The mission of the New York State Education Department (“NYSED” or “the Department”) is to raise the knowledge, skill, and opportunity of all people in New York. Our vision is to provide leadership for a system that yields the best educated people in the world. This mission and vision are only fulfilled when all are provided with the opportunity to learn and succeed. A high school diploma must represent a culminating achievement that is within the grasp of all New York students who seize that opportunity. The Graduation Measures Initiative (“the Initiative”) was launched to undertake a thoughtful and inclusive review of the requirements students must meet to graduate.

The Initiative sought to explore what it means to obtain a diploma in New York State and what that diploma should signify to ensure educational excellence and equity for all students in New York State.

**In reflection of the New York State Board of Regents’ (“the Regents”) and the Department’s shared commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and with a foundation rooted strongly in the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework, the Initiative was developed to address two critical needs:**

1

**To create equity  
in New York State  
public education.**

2

**To ensure New York’s students  
gain the knowledge and  
skills necessary to succeed  
in future endeavors.**

## Research and Feedback

Stakeholder  
Feedback Sessions  
Literature and  
Policy Review  
Surveys and  
ThoughtExchange  
Feedback  
Student and Parent  
Feedback  
BRC Meetings

## Four Priority Areas

1. Multiple pathways  
leading to one high  
school diploma
2. Assessment flexibility
3. Understanding  
of meaningful  
life-ready credentials
4. Culturally responsive  
curriculum,  
instruction, and  
assessment

## Portrait of a Graduate Recommendations

What we want all  
students to know  
and be able to do  
upon graduation  
to be successful  
in our rapidly-  
changing world

## 12 Recommendations



**Figure 1.** Work of the Commission



**Guided by research, stakeholder feedback, and their expertise and experiences, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures (“the Commission” or “BRC”) identified high-level skills, knowledge areas, and competencies that holistically reflect successful outcomes of P-12 education.**

To re-envision a system that provides equitable opportunities for all New York State students to achieve these outcomes, the Commission developed four priority areas to target change:

**Multiple pathways leading to one high school diploma**

**Assessment flexibility**

**Understanding of meaningful life-ready credentials**

**Culturally responsive curriculum, instruction, and assessment**



These skills, knowledge areas, and competencies were identified by the Commission and listed in their recommendations for a New York State Portrait of a Graduate, serving as both a foundation and vision for what students should know, be able to do, and embody upon graduation in order to be successful in a complex and rapidly changing world.

**The Commission envisioned the New York State graduate as:**

**A Critical Thinker**

**Culturally Competent**

**An Effective Communicator**

**A Global Citizen**

**An Innovative Problem Solver**

**Literate Across Content Areas**

**Socially-Emotionally Competent**

The recommendations in this report reflect the work and best thinking of the Commission. While the Department supported the Commission throughout the process, Department staff intentionally and transparently did not provide suggestions or opinions in order to preserve the integrity of the final recommendations. After the recommendations are presented to the Regents, the Department will begin its work to develop proposed guidance, programmatic, and regulatory changes to address the goals and priorities of the Regents related to this initiative.

Over the course of several months, Commission members developed, and ultimately advanced, fifty-nine preliminary recommendations aligned with the four priority areas. Next, Commission members voted electronically on the preliminary recommendations by assigning a rating of “high priority,” “medium priority,” “low priority,” or “do not support.” Thirty-seven preliminary recommendations were identified by at least seventy-five percent (75%) of members as a high or medium priority for them. **Those thirty-seven recommendations were then combined into the following twelve recommendations:**

- 1. Replace the three diploma types with one diploma, with the option to add seals and endorsements.**
- 2. Include civic responsibility (ethics); cultural competence; financial literacy education; fine and performing arts; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) credit(s); and writing, including writing skills for real-world scenarios in diploma credit requirements.**
- 3. Ensure access to career and technical education (CTE), including internships and work-based learning opportunities for all students across New York State.**
- 4. Move to a model that organizes credit requirements— including content area credit requirements— into larger categories (e.g., mathematics and science courses could be included in the “STEM” category).**
- 5. Reduce and/or modify diploma assessment requirements to allow more assessment options.**
- 6. Create state-developed rubric(s) for any performance-based assessments allowed as an option to satisfy the diploma assessment requirements.**
- 7. Create more specific, tailored graduation requirements to address the unique circumstances of certain groups of students (e.g., non-compulsory age students, newcomer students, refugee students).**
- 8. Provide exemptions from diploma assessment requirements for students with significant cognitive disabilities and major life events and extenuating circumstances (e.g., medical conditions, death of a family member, trauma prior to sitting for a required exam).**
- 9. Pursue regulatory changes to allow the discretion to confer high school degrees posthumously.**
- 10. Require all New York State teacher preparation programs to provide instruction in culturally responsive-sustaining education (CRSE) practices and pedagogy.**
- 11. Require that professional development plans include culturally responsive-sustaining education practices and pedagogy.**
- 12. Review and revise the New York State learning standards.**



# Background

**This report and the Blue Ribbon Commission’s recommendations were presented to the Regents and the Commissioner of Education at the November 2023 board meeting. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the Graduation Measures Initiative and the Commission’s recommendations to update high school graduation requirements to better reflect the knowledge and skills required for success for the 21st Century and beyond.**

The Graduation Measures Initiative began to take shape in February 2019 when then-Chancellor Rosa wrote a column for On Board Magazine, declaring that it was time to rethink the high school diploma as the current system is leaving too many children behind. Commissioner Rosa posed questions which became the basis for the work of the Commission.

In July 2019, the Regents announced that they would undertake a comprehensive and inclusive review of the current high school diploma requirements and reconsider what a New York State diploma should signify to ensure educational excellence and equity for every

student. The Regents and the Department recognized that the current system has not met the needs of all students, particularly for vulnerable groups including students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, and students from low-income households. Although overall graduation rates continue to climb, the rates for Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students continue to lag behind those of their White and Asian peers—in most cases by more than ten to twenty percentage points. These students also earn diplomas with advanced designation or other honors at rates less than half of those of their peers. Commissioner Rosa and the Department have explained from the beginning of this process that this initiative was not about removing Regents Exam requirements. Rather, this endeavor was about ensuring all New York students are provided with the opportunity to learn in environments and demonstrate their skills and knowledge in ways that best match their strengths and talents.

Figure 2 details the Initiative's timeline. While the initial draft timeline proposed recommendations to the Regents in Summer 2024, the Regents decided in December 2022 to accelerate the work of the Commission.



Figure 2. Graduation Measures Initiative Timeline

# Phase I: Information Gathering & Learning

Phase I of the Initiative (2019 – 2022) was an information-gathering and learning phase. To help inform the work of the Commission, the Regents and the Department gathered input from many partners, including parents and caregivers, educators, administrators, school support staff, higher education experts, the business community, and the general public through nineteen in-person regional meetings across the state during Winter 2020. The regional meetings resumed in December 2021 following a pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Eight virtual meetings were held between Winter 2021 and Spring 2022, totaling over 1,000 participants. Attendees at each regional meeting had the opportunity to break into smaller groups to discuss and provide feedback on **five guiding questions**:

- 1. What do we want all students to know and to be able to do before they graduate;**
- 2. How do we want all students to demonstrate such knowledge and skills, while capitalizing on their cultures, languages, and experiences;**
- 3. How do you measure learning and achievement (as it pertains to the answers to #2) to ensure they are indicators of high school completion while enabling opportunities for all students to succeed;**
- 4. How can measures of achievement accurately reflect the skills and knowledge of our special populations, such as students with disabilities and English language learners; and**
- 5. What course requirements or examinations will ensure that all students are prepared for college, careers, and civic engagement?**

The Department requested assistance from the Region 2 Comprehensive Center (R2CC) to:

- 1) analyze the stakeholder feedback from the regional meetings,
- 2) conduct a literature review, and
- 3) prepare a policy scan of selected states' and countries' graduation requirements and policies.

The Regional 2 Comprehensive Center provides capacity-building technical assistance to support state education agencies (SEAs) and their regional and local constituents in three states (Connecticut, New York, and Rhode Island).

The stakeholder feedback gathered from the regional meetings was organized into two categories:

- 1) what students should know and be able to do before they graduate, and
- 2) how students should demonstrate their achievements in a way that accurately reflects their skills and knowledge.

Figure 3 summarizes the stakeholder feedback received from the regional meetings.

# 1

## What Students Should Know and Be Able to Do Before they Graduate

- 21st century skills (creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving, communication, and collaboration)
- social and emotional skills (including collaboration, communication, and self-management)
- digital literacy and information processing
- basic life and career skills
- authentic learning experiences (connecting classroom learning to the world in which students live)
- civic education and civic readiness

# 2

## How Students Should Demonstrate their Achievements in a Way that Accurately Reflects their Skills and Knowledge

- performance-based assessments
- experiential and work-based learning opportunities
- differentiated and growth-based assessments
- option to choose from several types of assessments (for all students)
- multiple assessment measures should be taken into consideration when determining graduation readiness
- modifying or dropping Regents Exam requirements

**Figure 3.** Summary of Stakeholder Feedback from Regional Meetings

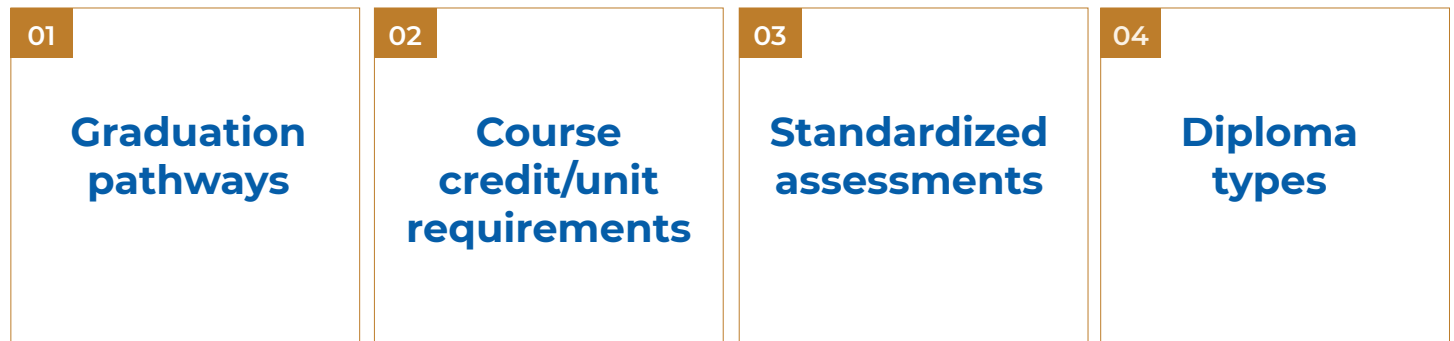
As illustrated below, the literature review analyzed the positive association between college, career, and civic readiness indicators and six success measures including college enrollment, college performance and/or persistence, college degree attainment, employment earnings or wages, and independent living.

### CCCR INDICATORS AND SUCCESS MEASURES

	College enrollment	College performance and/or persistence	College degree attainment	Employment	Earnings or wages	Independent living
Optional coursework	*	*	*	*	*	
Math curriculum	*	*	*			
College prep programs	*		*			
Additional experiences	*					
Non-academic skills						*
Required curriculum	*					
Graduation assessments						

*Note:* \* Indicates positive association between the CCCR indicators in the far-left column and CCCR success measures in the top row.

## A state policy and practice scan of graduation requirements conducted by the R2CC explored four major categories for comparison:



The exploration of graduation requirements revealed that thirty-nine states have a single diploma, with five states offering a waiver with less stringent requirements. Eleven states offer additional diplomas, such as honors, endorsed, advanced, or proficiency-based diplomas. A range of exit exams exist within the states that were explored. Additional state requirements and policies are highlighted below.

**Additional State Requirements and Policies**  
The seven states and beyond

- » Requirements
  - > Individual career plans (34 states)
  - > Civics education (37 states)
  - > Consumer education/financial literacy (7 states)
  - > Computer science education (5 states)
- » Other policy/practice considerations
  - > Performance Assessments (at least 17 states)
  - > Work-based Learning and CTE (34 states)
  - > STE(A)M Education (varies greatly by state)

**CCNETWORK** Comprehensive Center Network  
REGION 2 Connecticut New York Rhode Island

For comparison, an international policy and practice scan explored the assessment, career planning, and apprenticeship models in Canada (Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario); England; Germany; and Switzerland. This scan revealed a common theme of apprenticeships and work-based learning. Students in these countries were well prepared with work-based skills, social-emotional learning (SEL), and transition skills. Students were treated as adults and their learning reflected real-life experiences. Relationships among community-based organizations, businesses, and the education department are a normal part of the way they do business and lead to lower unemployment, higher gross domestic product (GDP), and higher youth engagement.

Additional information about feedback collected from the regional meetings, the literature review, and the policy scan can be found in the Region 2 Comprehensive Center’s “Graduation Requirements and Measures: A review conducted for the New York State Board of Regents and the New York State Education Department” report.

# Phase II: Blue Ribbon Commission

Phase II of the Initiative (2022–2023) involved the formation and subsequent work of the New York State Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures. Upon completion and review of the feedback from the regional stakeholder meetings, the Regents launched the Commission at their September 2022 meeting. The Commission was tasked with developing recommendations on what measures of learning and achievement will best serve New York’s diverse student population as indicators of what they know and of their readiness for college, career, and civic life.

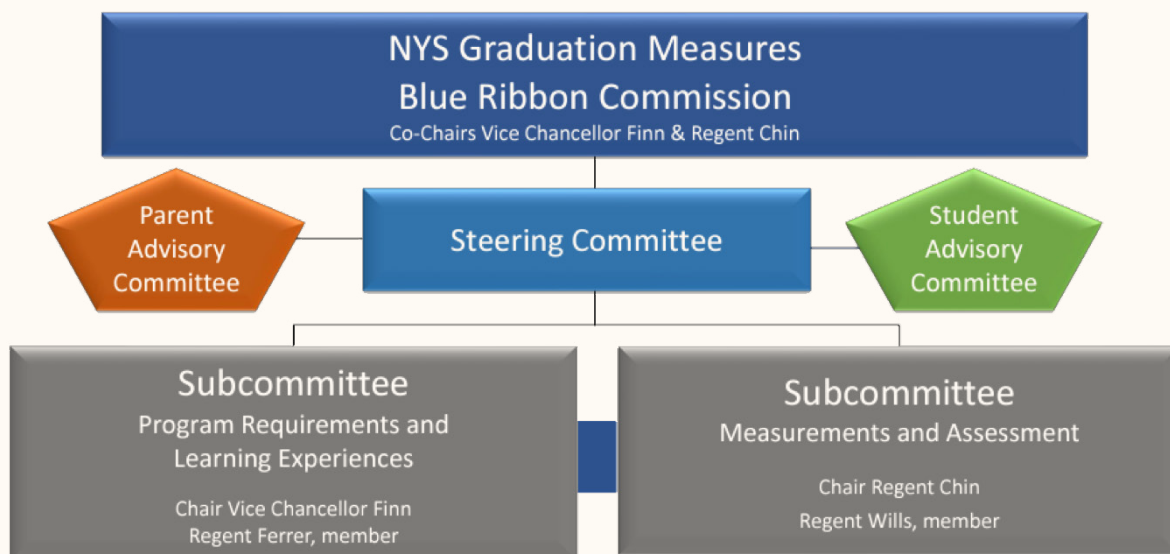
Vice Chancellor Josephine Victoria Finn and Regent Judith Chin served as Co-Chairs for the Commission. Additionally, Vice Chancellor Finn led the Program Requirements and Learning Experiences Subcommittee, and Regent Chin led the Measurements and Assessment Subcommittee. Regent Aramina Vega Ferrer and Regent Frances G. Wills also served on the Commission.

The Department asked the Regents for input and recommendations to initiate the selection process for the Commission members. All nominees, as well as members of the education community and the public, were invited to submit applications to serve on the Commission. The Department received over 400 completed applications.

The Department used a rigorous process to review the applications and made recommendations to the Commissioner and Chancellor on the composition of the Commission. The sixty-eight members who were selected clearly articulated their commitment to the Department’s mission to raise the knowledge, skill, and opportunity for all people in New York State. In selecting members for the Commission, careful consideration was taken to ensure that the membership reflected the diversity of New York State, including the State’s ethnic diversity, geographic diversity, and linguistic diversity. The diversity of the areas of expertise, current positions held, content knowledge, and representation of the need-resource categories (i.e., Big 5 to suburban, high-need to low-need) were also considered. Additional details about the composition of the Commission can be found in the [September 2022 presentation to the Regents](#).



Regional Stakeholder Meeting, Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES 2, Winter 2020



**Figure 4.** Structure of the NYS Graduation Measures Blue Ribbon Commission

**The Commission first met in October 2022 to discuss the mission, vision, and goals for the work of the Commission while also providing time for members to become acquainted.** Commission members practiced utilizing the ThoughtExchange platform by answering the question, “What community of practice and meeting norms should we establish for Commission meetings?” The Principles of Community of Practice (see Figure 5) were established through ThoughtExchange and employed throughout the rest of the Commission meetings. ThoughtExchange is a discussion management system which turns discussions into insightful data.

Monthly meetings were held between October 2022 and September 2023 to ensure the Commission was informed on the major issues impacting both graduation rates and student engagement, as well as the desires of various stakeholders. Pre-meeting materials were shared with Commission members prior to each meeting. The meetings typically followed a regular format, which included at least one presentation, a student spotlight focusing on a specific student subgroup (e.g., students with disabilities), a question-and-answer segment, and a breakout session for small group discussion. Additionally, Commission members were tasked with drafting a question to be posted to the public through ThoughtExchange. These monthly exchanges generated 234,000 total comments. Each Commission meeting concluded with members from each breakout group reporting out to the full Commission.

The Commission participated in eight virtual meetings prior to a three-day, in-person convening focused on drafting the recommendations.

## Principles of Community of Practice



### Put student interests first

That's why we are here.



### Listen to each other

Everyone's voice is important; leave space for other voices so everyone has a chance to share.



### Respect all thoughts and suggestions

Maintaining civility and respect allows for thoughtful and creative discourse. Since we are from diverse backgrounds, there will be different opinions, and everyone has something they consider valuable to share; disagreements are expected, but there is no room for disrespect.



### Honor privacy

No recording, texting, or tweeting what others say without their permission. This should be a safe space for open and honest communication so we are able to benefit from everyone's point of view; sharing other's thoughts on social media can be harmful and distracting.

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**Figure 5.** Principles of Community of Practice

### **In December 2022, the Commission meeting focused on the current graduation requirements and included a presentation from Department staff.**

An introductory video and the December presentation were both recorded and available for Commission members to refer to as they developed recommendations. During the breakout sessions, Commission members connected the current requirements to the State and International Policy and Practice Scans included in the Regional 2 Comprehensive Center's [Graduation Requirements and Measures report](#).

The ThoughtExchange question developed from the December 2022 meeting was, "What are the skills and abilities most needed by New York State graduates to be successful in their chosen post-secondary path?" The most common stakeholder responses to the question were: communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. Two responses shared the highest rating by stakeholders. The first indicated critical thinking and problem solving are essential for graduates because, "it's important that workers can evaluate what they think and hear and that they have the ability to solve problems." The second response indicated, "graduates need to be able to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and think critically about relevant issues so that they are able to see differing viewpoints, solve difficult problems, and function as productive members of society." Results from all of the ThoughtExchange questions can be referenced in Appendix A: Stakeholder Feedback.



**“Graduates need to be able to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and think critically about relevant issues so that they are able to see differing viewpoints, solve difficult problems, and function as productive members of society.”**

**– NEW YORK STATE STAKEHOLDER**

**In January 2023, Commission members were joined by Dr. Sarah Barzee, Director of the Region 2 Comprehensive Center, and her team.** The team provided a comprehensive review of the [Graduation Requirements and Measures report](#). During the breakout sessions, Commission members discussed the report and began discussing the components of the “Portrait of a Graduate” by considering what knowledge, skills, competencies, mindsets, and attributes New York State graduates should embody and exemplify for success in college, careers, citizenship, and 21st-century life.

The ThoughtExchange question developed for stakeholders at this meeting was two-fold: “What opportunities, experiences, and courses should be available to students in High School that align with their needs, dreams, and career exploration? Which of those should be mandatory?” Stakeholder feedback identified financial literacy, career exploration, and life skills as the opportunities, experiences, and courses that should be available to high school students. In a top-rated comment, one stakeholder noted, “Financial literacy should be required. Students need to understand finances, taxes, inflation, credit, etc. to be successful adults.”

### **The February 2023 Commission meeting focused on student preparation for direct entry into the workforce.**

The meeting began with data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), which highlighted that more than a third of students go directly into careers, the military, micro-credential programs, certificates, or other workforce preparation programs. Commission members Christopher White and Amber Rangel Mooney highlighted data from the private sector on workforce trends and developments. Two recent graduates joined the Commission meeting to share their high school coursework and learning experiences, decisions to go directly into the workforce, experiences at the beginning of their employment journey, and what they believe would have better prepared them for initial success in the workforce. During the breakout session, Commission members discussed which experiences and courses would best prepare students for post-secondary success.

The ThoughtExchange question for stakeholders developed at this meeting was, “Foundational skills, like initiative, time management, and collaboration, are shown to prepare students for school, college, career, civic engagement, and life, and are priorities of the business world. How can these skills be fostered and encouraged in K-12 education?” In their responses, stakeholders indicated these foundational skills can be fostered and encouraged through internships and work-based learning as well as project- or performance-based learning. Many respondents agreed with a stakeholder who noted that “applying learning empowers students to be leaders and better understand that their learning matters and is relevant.”

### **The March 2023 Commission meeting focused on student preparation for direct entry into institutions of higher education.**

The opening presentation included representatives from institutions of higher education. Dr. Laura Seinfeld, Dean at Long Island University (LIU) Post College of Education, Information, and Technology and LIU Brooklyn School of Education, and David Seinfeld, Consultant for School Planning and Partnerships at LIU Post, shared the private university’s perspective on bridging the gap between high school and college. The public perspective was shared by representatives from the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY). Ian Rosenblum, Senior Vice Chancellor for Policy Implementation and Chief of Staff, and Donna Linderman, Senior Vice Chancellor for Student Success represented the State University of New York (SUNY), and Commission members Andrea Soonachan, University Dean of K16 Initiatives, and Sarah Truelsch, Assistant Dean for Policy Research, represented the City University of New York (CUNY).

These presentations included information related to indicators of post-secondary readiness, the use of multiple measures to support admissions and placement, and opportunities to better align P-12 and higher education. Similar to previous meetings, Commission members were joined by recent graduates who shared their perspectives on direct entry into college from high school. The students discussed their experiences related to their high school coursework and learning experiences, decisions to go directly into college, experiences at the beginning of their higher education journey, and what they believe would have better prepared them for initial success in college. During the breakout session members discussed how to better align what students learn in High School to prepare them for success at institutions of higher education.

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**Many respondents agreed with a stakeholder who noted that “applying learning empowers students to be leaders and better understand that their learning matters and is relevant.”**

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The ThoughtExchange question developed for stakeholders at this meeting was, “If you could design or redesign your high school experience, what would it look like and why would you value it?” Stakeholders expressed a desire to place less emphasis on traditional standardized tests and more emphasis on opportunities for “real world learning.” In alignment with the literature review, stakeholders encouraged the Commission to increase the number of elective courses noting, “students will enroll, and it increases interest in content areas.”

### **In April 2023, the Commission meeting focused on the impact of current diploma requirements on students with disabilities and English language learners.**

Three students initiated the meeting by highlighting their high school experience, the programs offered by their high school or community to help students make the transition from high school to work or college, the opportunities they wish their high school had more of, and their recommendations related to future graduation requirements. Following the students’ discussion, Commission members were joined by Department staff

who presented graduation results for the 2018 cohort (2022 graduates) and discussed the current diploma requirements' impact on students with disabilities and English language learners. During the breakout session, members discussed their recommendations to address the needs of students with disabilities and multilingual learners through updating the graduation requirements.

The ThoughtExchange question developed for stakeholders at this meeting was two-fold: "What are the barriers, including the unseen barriers, to student achievement that are not reflected in current graduation requirements? How can we address those?" The barriers cited in the ThoughtExchange responses included mental health, large class sizes, and funding. Stakeholders indicated that we could address those barriers through vocational training, personalized instruction, and increased instruction in soft (essential) skills.

**Students also launched the May 2023 Commission meeting.** This meeting emphasized how current graduation requirements impact the educational journey for court-mandated youth and military connected students. The students shared their high school experiences, the programs offered by their school or community to help students make the transition from high school to work or college, the opportunities they wish their high school had more of, and their recommendations related to future graduation requirements. A brief presentation from

Department staff provided a summary of New York's current education system and additional considerations for Commission members to ponder as they develop their recommendations. During the breakout sessions, Commission members identified the priority areas they believe need to be addressed in their recommendations. Members also collaborated to rank the priority areas identified by each breakout group.

**The June 2023 Commission meeting focused on the policymaking process and provided members time to refine priority areas in preparation for the July in-person convening.** Chris Gabrieli, chairman of the Board of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (MA BHE), co-founder and a partner of the nonprofit Empower Schools, and lecturer at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, led Commission members in a conversation about the policymaking process. Members of the Commission's Steering Committee then shared their analysis of the priority areas identified during the May 2023 Commission meeting. Next, Department staff highlighted additional considerations to guide the Commission's work. In the breakout session, Commission members highlighted priority areas they felt were missing from those identified by the Steering Committee and, for each priority area, identified goals for all students and options for recommendations.



# Priority Areas

**The Commission identified four priority areas to re-envision a system that provides an equitable opportunity for all New York State students to achieve high-level skills, knowledge areas, and competencies that holistically reflect successful outcomes of P-12 education.**

## **CONSIDERATION OF MULTIPLE PATHWAYS LEADING TO ONE DIPLOMA**

The consideration of multiple pathways leading to one diploma was the primary priority area identified. Due to the complex nature of our current system, the Commission identified a need to simplify the system and provide many pathways leading to one diploma. The Commission sought to ensure future graduation requirements are clear and simple while providing rigorous, equitable pathways to meet the needs of all students including students with disabilities, English language learners, and other underserved populations. The Commission also recognized a need to ensure students, families, and schools are prepared to understand and access the multiple pathways that exist.

## **REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT FLEXIBILITY**

The Commission prioritized assessment flexibility. While the Commission recognized the value of Regents Exams as a valid, reliable, and efficient assessment for determining student proficiency, they also sought to provide additional options for alternative assessments. The Steering Committee noted, “While we still value the Regents Exams, we must build flexibility within our assessment system.” The Commission highlighted their desire to reconsider the number of Regents Exams required to earn a high school diploma. The Commission noted that alternative assessment options must provide the rigor necessary for students to demonstrate the skills and competencies needed for success after high school. The Commission also expressed a desire to expand assessment options that could be utilized for earning credit.

## **UNDERSTANDING OF MEANINGFUL LIFE-READY CREDENTIALS**

The Commission prioritized the understanding of meaningful life-ready credentials, and desired to ensure that students who demonstrate life-ready skills obtain credentials during high school that count towards graduation. The Commission valued credentials that evaluate soft skills (e.g., problem solving, empathy, resilience, time management), career skills (e.g., public speaking, coding, civic engagement), and literacy (e.g., financial literacy, digital literacy, media literacy).

## **CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT**

The Commission recognized that decisions related to curriculum and instruction are locally determined by individual schools and districts in New York, they also sought to explore opportunities for more culturally responsive curriculum, instruction, and assessments that serve New York’s diverse student body. The Commission emphasized their desire to further opportunities for students to showcase their knowledge in the classroom and through required assessments.



Regional Stakeholder Meeting, Questar III BOCES Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute (PR/HYLI) Delegates- Student meeting, Winter 2020.

Figure 6 illustrates the four priorities to target change in the New York State high school graduation requirements.



Figure 6. Four Priorities

# Student and Parent Advisory Meetings

A close-up, side-profile photograph of a young man with short brown hair. He is wearing a beige cochlear implant on his left ear. He is holding a blue pen and writing on a white notepad. He is wearing a red, white, and blue plaid shirt. The background is blurred.

**Through twelve student and parent advisory meetings, which occurred remotely April 2023 through June 2023, the Department gathered additional feedback from students and parents.** At these meetings, eighty-four students and 155 parents participated in discussions on five main topics: credit requirements, assessments requirements, graduation rates, post-secondary career paths, and post-secondary college paths. At the end of each meeting, participants were given time to reflect on their views and perspectives and record their responses in a ThoughtExchange for each topic discussed. ThoughtExchange questions and results for the meetings can be found in Appendix A: Stakeholder Feedback.

## **CREDIT REQUIREMENTS**

The first topic that students and parents discussed during the advisory meetings was credit requirements. The presentation included the following topics: what the New York State Education Department does and does not regulate, required credit distributions, and pathways to earning credit. The information about NYSED was provided to help participants understand the policies related to the Commission's charge and those outside its purview.

Student comments in the ThoughtExchange discussion on credit requirements kept coming back to one word: flexibility. Their responses tell a clear story that, among students, flexibility in credit requirements is seen as a priority. Many stressed that credit requirements can pose real obstacles to students graduating and that taking classes that students are more interested in, or that benefit them and their preferred post-secondary life choices, should also be possibilities. Some students also stressed that schools with the fewest resources may not provide as broad a choice in electives and other means for fulfilling credit requirements making them less accessible to some students.



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**Student comments in the ThoughtExchange discussion on credit requirements kept coming back to one word: flexibility.**

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Parents' comments consistently emphasized the importance of flexibility. They expressed concerns about the need for students to have greater flexibility in choosing courses and program options that align with their interests, career aspirations, and learning styles. Another significant point raised by parents was the need to enhance accessibility to career and technical education (CTE) programs for students.

## **ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS**

The second topic discussed by students and parents was assessment requirements. The presentation included the requirements of the 2015 federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) legislation, New York State's multiple measures approach to assessment, and the multiple pathways available to students, including career and technical education (CTE); career development and occupational studies (CDOS); world languages; arts; and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) pathways, among other pathways. Student comments were centered on the need for variety in assessments. Many stressed and approved of comments saying that the Regents Exams, and standardized tests in general, are not sufficient assessments for measuring student mastery of different curricula. Many students homed in on the need for more hands-on, project-based, or holistic forms of assessment, while others focused on a desire for Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams to be allowed to take the place of Regents Exams for assessment purposes for some students.

Overall, students emphasized the need for greater choice among a variety of assessment options. Other issues that were consistently elevated included the stress caused to students by exams such as the Regents Exams. Parent comments similarly centered on the need for more assessment options for students of different learning styles, needs, and interests. Parents consistently commented on and highly rated comments about the need for more adaptable and holistic kinds of assessment. Having performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs) or portfolio- and project-based assessments in place of the Regents Exams were among the most popular ideas among parents, with some commenting that they felt that these could be more equitable and accessible alternatives for students.

## **FLEXIBILITIES FOR CERTAIN STUDENTS**

The next topics discussed were various flexibilities available to certain students, including students with disabilities. The presentation included traditional appeal options for students, specific options for students with disabilities, exemptions and other alternatives to certain graduation requirements, and graduation rate trends from the last ten years, breaking down different outcomes evidenced for different subgroups of students.

Student comments on how best to ensure equitable outcomes for all students were far more diffuse than in previous questions. Student contributions covered ideas such as needing more supportive services for students,

project-based learning, more diverse curricular options, and having projects and assessments better tailored to different learning styles. However, in general, there was no clear consensus during this discussion, with students highly rating each other's ideas, but not clearly favoring any one approach.

Although parent comments were less consistent than in the previous two discussions, some clear ideas did stand out. One such idea was the need to remove testing requirements for all students, allowing some students—often the most marginalized, including students with disabilities and English language learners—to graduate without exams. The parents also recognized that career-ready pathways may be of greater interest to and more desirable for some students.

## **WORKFORCE AND CAREER PATHWAYS**

The advisory meetings then moved to an in-depth discussion of workforce and career pathways following graduation. The presentation included trends evidenced today for students enrolling in institutions of higher learning (IHEs), labor market trends of the last several years, and the common skills lacking in applicants that are essential for students to acquire prior to graduation.

Student comments focused on a wide range of different ideas. Some of the most recurring ideas included performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs), internships, and workforce development to better infuse essential skills for success in the workforce. Students also emphasized that more workforce- or trade-oriented pathways should be encouraged, rather than strictly encouraging students on a college-ready path. Parent comments largely focused on the need to teach students soft skills (e.g., teamwork, adaptability), many of which were recommended by students, for example, project-based learning, internships, and other real-world work experience.

## **COLLEGE PATHWAYS**

The final area discussed during the student and parent advisory meetings was the variety of college pathways available after high school graduation. The presentation included dual enrollment opportunities and general college admissions procedures, as well as the skills profile that college administrators favor in high school graduates today. Student comments focused on a wide range of topics, but repeatedly arrived on the need to give students more independence and to impart more life and real-world skills in high school. Parent comments also emphasized these points, with a large focus on the need to teach more life skills in classrooms to better prepare students for college.

# July In-Person BRC Convening



**The in-person convening of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures took place July 25-27, 2023, in Albany.** On the convening's first day, following a welcome and introduction (see Figure 7), Commission members were presented with a comprehensive analysis of the qualitative data collected through the monthly ThoughtExchange questions and student/parent advisory meetings (see Appendix C, Figure 11). Commission members also discussed white papers shared by various stakeholder groups. On the convening's first day, following a welcome and introduction (see Figure 7), Jonah Martinez Goldstein presented a comprehensive analysis of the qualitative data collected through the monthly ThoughtExchange questions and student/parent advisory meetings (see Appendix C, Figure 11).

**On July 26, Commission members reviewed Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Board Chairperson Chris Gabrieli's presentation from the June 2023 Commission meeting and were reminded of the need to ensure the final recommendations provide a solution to an existing problem.** Commission members then worked in small groups to create mind maps of the problems they intended to solve through the work of the Commission and their ideas for potential solutions. Representatives from the Region 2 Comprehensive Center joined Commission members on the second day to present their report on the implementation of performance assessments in select states, "Graduation Requirements and Measures: A Review of Performance Assessment Implementation in Select States for the New York State Education Department."



**“Being able to give the student voice, especially on the Steering Committee and having that leadership role has been really rewarding. I feel like the Education Department is really listening to what we have to say and to our opinions.”**

**– SAMANTHA BRUNO, STUDENT STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER**

Following small group discussions on guiding questions related to the presentation, Commission members self-selected presentations to attend that were provided by their fellow Commission members. The topics were identified by Commission members and included graduation measures for non-compulsory age youth, newcomers, and court-involved youth; one diploma: pathways for students with disabilities and English language learners; the need for the Arts to be a strong component of the graduation requirements; a parent’s perspective on the high school experience; and African American history and diversity in our State curriculum.

**The second day of the in-person convening ended with a presentation on tips for writing recommendations provided by Jennifer Ellis, Director of State Government Relations, and Anne Hyslop, Director of Policy Development, from All4Ed, a national education policy non-profit.** Commission members were also provided time to draft proposed recommendations in small groups and then report out to the full Commission. The third day of the convening featured dedicated time for Commission members to continue drafting their recommendations. At the conclusion of this final day, each group shared their recommendations with the full Commission.

The Steering Committee members stayed in Albany for one additional day to continue to work with All4Ed to organize the preliminary recommendations.

**In August 2023, the Steering Committee met in Albany, where they synthesized the recommendations from the convening in July in preparation for the development of the Final Recommendations Survey.**



**Figure 7.** Collective Next, LLC, graphic facilitator’s Depiction of the July BRC Meeting’s Welcome and Introduction

# Portrait of a Graduate

**A “Portrait of a Graduate” is a set of high-level skills, knowledge areas, and competencies that holistically reflect successful outcomes of P-12 education for a state, district, or school. In recent years, an increasing number of states have created a state-level Portrait of a Graduate to serve as both a foundation and vision for what students should know, be able to do, and embody upon graduation to be successful in a complex and rapidly changing world.**

The Commission members were asked to identify the academic, personal, and interpersonal attributes that all New York State graduates should possess to be successful in college, careers, citizenship, and life. Upon adoption by the Regents, the New York State Portrait of a Graduate will serve as the north star of our state education system and will support both post-secondary and workforce transition by creating a shared understanding of the skills and knowledge students have mastered.

## **DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NYS PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE**

The Commission, using a three-pronged approach, developed recommendations for the New York State (NYS) Portrait of a Graduate.



**Engaging community  
in discussion**



**Brainstorming Portrait of a  
Graduate skills, knowledge,  
and competencies**



**Vetting and building  
consensus around the  
Portrait of a Graduate skills**

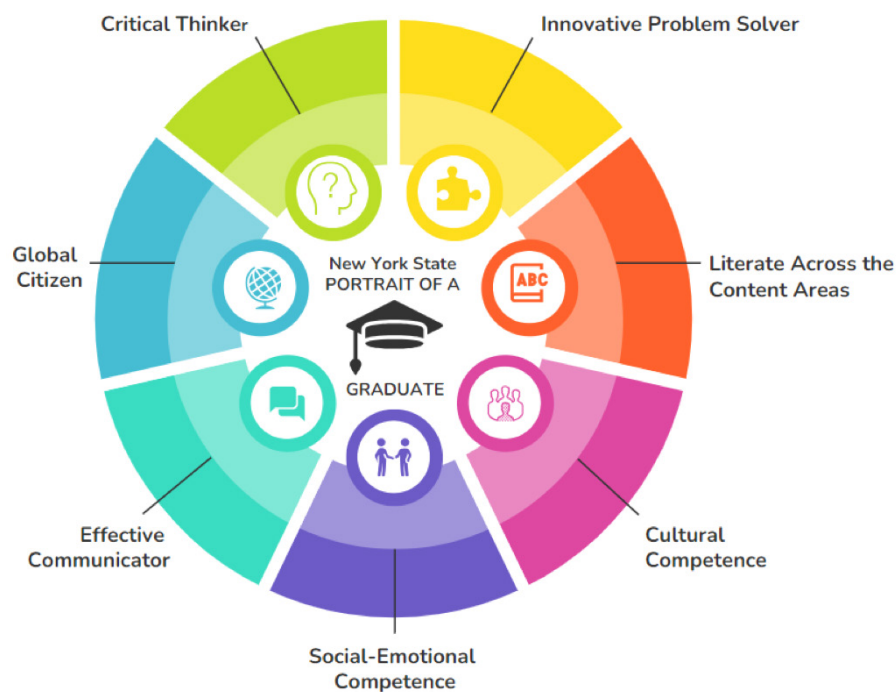
The Commission oriented the community discussion around the guiding question, “What knowledge, skills, and mindsets will be most needed by New York State graduates to be successful in a rapidly changing and complex world?” Over 8,400 members of the NYS community participated in the ThoughtExchange, offering 7,000 thoughts and 136,000 ratings. The top key thoughts from stakeholders, including students, parents, and educators, were critical thinking, problem solving, and communication.

The Commission reviewed several Portrait of Graduate samples from other states and data from the student and parent advisory meetings, as well as ThoughtExchanges. The Commission members then brainstormed attributes for the New York State Portrait of a Graduate. The attributes discussed during the brainstorming activity were illustrated by a graphic designer (See Appendix C, Figure 12) and ranked. Forty-seven Commission members participated in the rank voting of potential attributes, and the top twelve Portrait of a Graduate attributes were shared. While there was complete agreement between the top attributes identified by stakeholders and the Commission, members recommended taking another look at the attributes before finalizing the Portrait of a Graduate (Figure 8).

The Steering Committee reviewed the top twelve attributes and embedded the top-ranked choices into the New York State Portrait of a Graduate (Figure 9). The Steering Committee unanimously agreed that New York State graduates should be academically ready, life ready, and future ready. The recommendations for the New York State Portrait of a Graduate were shared at the final Blue Ribbon Commission meeting held in September 2023.

Step	Description
Blue Ribbon Commission Stakeholder Meeting	The BRC facilitated a stakeholder meeting to begin the discussion on the Portrait of a Graduate.
Stakeholder Engagement	The BRC engaged and received input from the NYS community through ThoughtExchange, as well as student and parent advisories.
Design Session 1	The BRC met in person to discuss the Portrait of a Graduate, ThoughtExchange results, and brainstorm attributes.
Design Session 2	The BRC ranked the top 12 attributes.
Design Session 3	The BRC Steering Committee met to review the results and make recommendations for the NYS Portrait of a Graduate.

**Figure 8.** Stakeholder Engagement Process to Develop the NYS Portrait of a Graduate



**Figure 9.** New York State Portrait of a College, Career, and Civic Ready Graduate

**The final Commission meeting was held in September 2023.** This meeting informed Commission members of the Steering Committee's re-organization of the Portrait of a Graduate, the final report structure, the recommendation review process completed by the Steering Committee in July and August, and the results from the Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures: Recommendations Survey (see Appendix B: Recommendations Survey Results). Commission members were invited to attend the November 2023 Board of Regents meeting.



# Recommendations

The following recommendations reflect consensus by the New York State Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures. Consensus is defined by a minimum of seventy-five percent of members agreeing on the recommendations, where they indicated that the recommendation was a high or medium priority on the Recommendations Survey.

The recommendations are listed below and grouped in the following categories: number of diplomas and seals or endorsements, credit and program requirements, diploma assessment requirements, options for specific students, and other considerations. The numbering of the recommendations does not indicate prioritization. Additional data, including the list of every recommendation voted on by Commission members, can be referenced in Appendix B: Recommendations Survey Results.

The recommendations made by the Commission have fiscal implications and may also require amendments to the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education to add or revise the current high school requirements.

## NUMBER OF DIPLOMAS AND SEALS/ENDORSEMENTS

The first recommendation relates to the number of diploma types and the option to add seals and endorsements.

01

### **Replace the three diploma types with one diploma with the option to add seals and endorsements.**

Currently, New York State has three diploma types: local, Regents, and Regents with advanced designation. In addition, there are seals and endorsements that can be applied to one or more diploma type (e.g., Seal of Biliteracy, Seal of Civic Readiness, Mastery in Mathematics). Visit the Diploma Types webpage and the Endorsements and Seals webpage for additional information.

By moving to a one-diploma system with optional seals and endorsements, a New York State high school diploma would reflect rigorous standards while allowing students to demonstrate their unique interests and accomplishments.

## CREDIT AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Recommendations 2–4 relate to credit and program requirements in potential future graduation measures.

02

### **Diploma credit requirements must include:**

- **civic responsibility (ethics);**
- **cultural competence;**
- **financial literacy education, including systems, personal finance, and the social-historical context;**
- **fine and performing arts;**
- **science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) credit(s); and**
- **writing, including writing skills for real-world scenarios.**

Currently all three diploma types rely on the same credit requirements. Visit the Credit Requirements [webpage](#) and the Earning Credit [webpage](#) for additional information, including the credit distribution table.

By including the above recommendations within credit requirements, students would be prepared to navigate the complexities facing today's society with essential knowledge and life skills necessary for success in college, career, and civic engagement.

03

### **Ensure access to career and technical education (CTE), including internships and work-based learning opportunities for all students across New York State.**

While this option currently exists for some students, access to CTE varies throughout the state. Commission members emphasized the need to offer and recognize relevant, rigorous, and student-choice driven opportunities to earn credit, including robust career or technical education pathways, apprenticeships, internships, and externships, that will fit the individual needs of all students.

04

### **Move to a model that organizes credit requirements, including content area credit requirements into larger categories (e.g., mathematics and science courses could be included in the “STEM” category). This model must:**

- **allow for a competency-based (proficiency-based) model to award credit;**
- **allow local districts to offer unique options for students to earn course credits (these options must reflect students' identity and experiences);**
- **increase the number of elective courses that may be used to fulfill credit requirements; and**
- **provide student choice in the options used to satisfy the diploma credit requirements.**

Current credit requirements are distinctly separated into content areas. Visit the Credit Requirements [webpage](#) for a breakdown of current credit requirements.

The Commission placed a great deal of interest in increasing student flexibility to demonstrate knowledge and skill and opportunities that may not fit in the current model. This recommendation follows trends in other states and would provide students with more opportunities to meet graduation requirements.

## DIPLOMA ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

Recommendations 5–6 relate to diploma assessment requirements in future graduation measures.

### **05 Reduce and/or modify diploma assessment requirements to allow more assessment options. Such options must:**

- align with the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework;
- allow students to demonstrate competence in multiple ways;
- assess the attributes included in the portrait of a graduate;
- be available to all students;
- include writing, including writing skills for real-world scenarios as an integral part;
- measure higher-order thinking skills;
- meet the needs of all learners, including English language learners, students with disabilities, and other underserved populations; and
- provide student choice in the options used to satisfy the requirements including performance-based assessments (PBA), capstone projects, and experiential learning.

Currently, diploma assessment requirements include Regents Exams, NYSED-approved Regents Exam Alternatives, and pathway options. Visit the [Diploma Types webpage](#) for additional information. At present, New York State is one of small number of states that require an exit exam to graduate high school.

The Commission is committed to ensuring that rigor is maintained and recognizes that a traditional standardized test is only one way to demonstrate achievement of the learning standards. While the Commission recognized the value of Regents Exams as one valid measure for determining student proficiency, by providing assessment flexibility, students could demonstrate content knowledge in a way that best suits their individual strengths and talents. [Visit the Diploma Types webpage for additional information.](#)

### **06 Create state-developed rubric(s) for any performance-based assessments allowed as an option to satisfy the diploma assessment requirements. The Commission recommends convening P-20 teachers to develop performance-based assessment rubrics and create a curated collection of exemplars.**

While teachers are already involved in the creation and scoring of our existing state assessments, by creating state-developed rubric(s) for any performance-based assessments allowed as an option to satisfy the diploma assessment requirements, the recommendation would address the need to both retain rigor and high standards as well as engage educators in the field.

## OPTIONS FOR SPECIFIC STUDENTS

Recommendations 7–9 relate to options for specific subgroups of students in future graduation measures.

### **07 Create more specific, tailored graduation requirements to address the unique circumstances of certain groups of students (e.g., non-compulsory age students, newcomer students, refugee students).**

### **08 Provide exemptions from diploma assessment requirements for:**

- students with significant cognitive disabilities and
- major life events and extenuating circumstances (e.g., medical conditions, death of a family member, trauma prior to sitting for a required exam).

**09 Pursue regulatory changes to allow the discretion to confer high school degrees posthumously.**

As leaders in education, the Commission strongly believes in being mindful of individual student circumstance and needs. The three recommendations above would ensure that there are supports in place to address circumstances beyond the control of the student.

In addition to these recommendations, Commission members strongly advise replacing deficit language, such as “safety nets,” with language such as “opportunities” and “access.” Commission members advise of the need for representatives of special populations to be deeply involved in conversations related to changes in future graduation measures.

**LEARNING STANDARDS AND TEACHER EDUCATION**

Some of the initial recommendations received were not directly related to the future graduation measures but would have a potential impact on the future diploma requirements. Recommendations 10–12 include revisions to learning standards and teacher education.

**10 Require all NYS teacher preparation programs to provide instruction in culturally responsive-sustaining education (CR-SE) practices and pedagogy.**

Currently, NYS teacher preparation programs include coursework on human development, which covers a variety of topics such as the impact of culture, heritage, socioeconomic level, and factors in the home, school, and community on students’ readiness to learn. By requiring programs to include instruction explicitly on CR-SE practices, as outlined in the recommendation, teacher candidates would gain the knowledge and skills to work with all students from diverse backgrounds in their future classrooms.

















**11 Require that professional development plans include culturally responsive-sustaining education practices and pedagogy.**

Currently, school districts are required to submit professional development plans for teachers for the year to NYSED. By requiring that professional development plans include culturally responsive-sustaining education practices and pedagogy, this recommendation will ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills to design and implement instruction that meets the needs of all students.

**12 Review and revise the NYS learning standards to:**

- **better align with college and career expectations, and update for family and consumer sciences, health, media literacy, and climate education;**
- **emphasize higher-order skills and competencies (e.g., health education, communication, decision-making, time management, soft skills); and**
- **use a culturally responsive-sustaining education (CRSE)/diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and accessibility lens in all subject areas, including history.**

In the past ten years, the New York State Board of Regents has adopted revised standards in eight content areas. Periodic revision of the standards includes collaboration with educators and educational stakeholders to ensure reflection of key knowledge and skills in the content areas, as well as developmental appropriateness and alignment with the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework and the needs of all New York State students. This recommendation stresses the importance of continuously revising the standards to ensure that students have the content knowledge and skills to prepare them for an ever-changing world.

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Priority 1</b> Multiple Pathways— one Diploma	<b>Priority 2</b> Assessment Flexibility	<b>Priority 3</b> Life-ready Credentials	<b>Priority 4</b> Culturally responsive curriculum, instruction, and assessment
One diploma with option to add seals				
Diploma credit requirement				
Career & Technical Education				
Model Credit Requirement				
Modify assessment requirements				
State-developed rubric(s)				
Options to tailor graduation requirement to accommodate students with unique circumstances				
Opportunity for Exemptions				
Regulatory changes to allow the discretion to confer high school degrees posthumously				
Adding (CR-SE) to teacher preparation programs				
Adding (CR-SE) in PD sessions				
Revise NYS learning standards				

# For Additional Consideration

**As the Regents consider these recommendations, the Commission advises the Board of Regents to renew the Department's commitment to literacy in all forms and also consider the following:**

- adequate funding must be provided to local school districts to implement these important shifts;
- advocacy and education to all stakeholders would be imperative in supporting the recommended paradigm shifts in assessment, credit distribution, and single diploma type;
- consider when New York State's diploma requirements will be reevaluated in the future;
- consider and plan now for how the Department will evaluate the impact of these proposed changes to graduation requirements, including the impact on access, opportunities, and outcomes for historically underrepresented and underserved student groups, in particular;
- engage higher education institutions to frame their delivery of education of future teachers; and
- engage providers of professional learning to support current P-12 educators in facilitating students' attainment of the skills in the Portrait of a Graduate and meaningful life-ready credentials.

**The Commission also advised the Regents to decouple the timeline to graduate from credit attainment (i.e., students could take 3-6 years to graduate) to reflect students' abilities to achieve their academic goals. While most students complete their high school education in four years, there is no state requirement for students to obtain specific credits in specific years of high school. Students can accelerate their graduation to exit high school in fewer than four years. Students can also extend their high school education if additional time is needed for them to satisfy the diploma requirements.**

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The final survey question provided space for Commission members to share individual comments related to additional recommendations they felt were not included in the survey. The results of that question are presented in the word cloud below (see Figure 10). The size of each word represents the number of times the word was used by Commission members in their collective responses. This depiction of Commission members' thoughts emphasizes their shared commitment to the students of New York State. Throughout the entire process, Commission members maintained their focus on students. This is evidenced from the initial development of the Principals of Community of Practice (see Figure 5) to the culminating survey question.



**Figure 10.** Word cloud representing Commission members' responses to final survey question



# Conclusion and Next Steps

**The New York State Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures Initiative has unveiled comprehensive recommendations.** These proposed recommendations aim to create a flexible and inclusive framework, accommodating diverse learning styles, and ensuring equity for all students in New York State. The recommendations seek to empower New York State students with a well-rounded education that is not only tailored to students' individual needs but also positions them strongly for successful careers, higher education pursuits, and civic engagement. The work of the Commission will conclude in November 2023 with the presentation of the recommendations to the Regents. The Regents will begin policy discussions related to any future changes to the State's graduation measures after the November presentation.

## APPENDIX A:

# Stakeholder Feedback

### Blue Ribbon Commission Monthly ThoughtExchange Questions

#### December 2022

*What are the skills and abilities most needed by NY State graduates to be successful in their chosen post-secondary path?*

Themes: communication, critical thinking/problem solving, collaboration

[December 2022 ThoughtExchange results](#)

#### January 2023

*What opportunities, experiences, and courses should be available to students in High School that align with their needs, dreams, and career exploration? Which of those should be mandatory?*

Themes: financial literacy, career exploration, life skills

[January 2023 ThoughtExchange results](#)

#### February 2023

*Foundational skills, like initiative, time management, and collaboration, are shown to prepare students for school, college, career, civic engagement, and life, and are priorities of the business world. How can these skills be fostered and encouraged in K-12 education?*

Themes: internships and work-based learning, project- or performance-based learning

[February 2023 ThoughtExchange results](#)

#### March 2023

*If you could design or redesign your high school experience, what would it look like and why would you value it?*

Themes: less emphasis on traditional standardized tests, more opportunities for “real world learning,” more authentic experiences

[March 2023 ThoughtExchange results](#)

#### April 2023

*What are the barriers, including the unseen barriers, to student achievement that are not reflected in current graduation requirements? How can we address those?*

Themes (barriers): mental health, large class sizes, funding

Themes (addressing barriers): vocational training, personalized instruction, increased instruction in soft skills

[April 2023 ThoughtExchange results](#)

APPENDIX B:

# Recommendations Survey Results

The following results are ordered by the combined percentage of respondents indicating the initial recommendation was a high or medium priority. Recommendations and language included in the report are highlighted in blue. Due to rounding, totals may not equal 100%.

NUMBER OF DIPLOMAS AND SEALS/ENDORSEMENTS

Recommendation	% indicating this is a <b>high or medium</b> priority	% indicating this is a high priority	% indicating this is a medium priority	% indicating this is a low priority	% indicating they do not support this
Keep the option to add seals and endorsements.	<b>84</b>	51	33	10	6
Replace the three diploma types with one diploma.	<b>77</b>	69	8	5	19
Keep the current three diploma types.	<b>21</b>	10	11	17	62
Eliminate the option to add seals and endorsements.	<b>8</b>	5	3	25	67

## APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDATIONS SURVEY RESULTS CNT'D

### CREDIT AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Recommendation	% indicating this is a <b>high or medium</b> priority	% indicating this is a high priority	% indicating this is a medium priority	% indicating this is a low priority	% indicating they do not support this
Ensure access to career and technical education, including internships and work-based learning opportunities for all students across the State.	<b>97</b>	83	14	2	2
Allow for a competency-based (proficiency-based) model to award credit.	<b>94</b>	64	30	5	2
Students must have choice in the options used to satisfy the diploma credit requirements.	<b>94</b>	75	19	3	3
Writing, including writing skills for real-world scenarios, must be an integral part of credit requirements.	<b>93</b>	59	34	6	0
Move to a model that organizes credit requirements, including content area credit requirements into larger categories (e.g., mathematics and science courses could be included in the "STEM" category).	<b>92</b>	61	31	8	0
Allow local districts to offer unique options for students to earn course credits. Options must reflect students' identity and experiences.	<b>91</b>	61	30	3	6
Diploma credit requirements must include civic responsibility (ethics).	<b>89</b>	50	39	5	6
Diploma credit requirements must include financial literacy education, including systems, personal finance, and the social-historical context.	<b>85</b>	47	38	9	6
Diploma credit requirements must include cultural competence.	<b>83</b>	41	42	13	5
Increase the number of elective courses that may be used to fulfill credit requirements.	<b>82</b>	48	34	9	8
Diploma credit requirements must include science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) credit(s).	<b>80</b>	42	38	17	3
Diploma credit requirements must include digital and media literacy education.	<b>73</b>	42	31	22	5
Add one-half credit requirement for financial literacy.	<b>72</b>	42	30	16	13
Require instruction in ethnic studies as part of the high school graduation requirements.	<b>72</b>	33	39	22	6
Allow more flexibility for how students earn course credit by removing required courses.	<b>70</b>	36	34	20	9
Add a graduation requirement for career and technical education (CTE) and/or work-based learning.	<b>70</b>	39	31	16	14
Diploma credit requirements must include a career planning and goal setting course.	<b>67</b>	36	31	19	14
Diploma credit requirements must include time management and other life skills.	<b>65</b>	34	31	25	9

## APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDATIONS SURVEY RESULTS CNT'D

### DIPLOMA ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

Recommendation	% indicating this is a <b>high or medium</b> priority	% indicating this is a high priority	% indicating this is a medium priority	% indicating this is a low priority	% indicating they do not support this
Reduce and modify diploma assessment requirements.	<b>81</b>	58	23	9	9
Modify diploma assessment requirements to allow more assessment options.	<b>78</b>	50	28	11	11
Reduce diploma assessment requirements.	<b>66</b>	28	38	19	16
Replace diploma assessment requirements.	<b>55</b>	30	25	14	31
Eliminate diploma assessment requirements.	<b>38</b>	27	11	19	44
Maintain current diploma assessment requirements.	<b>15</b>	6	9	19	66

## APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDATIONS SURVEY RESULTS CNT'D

### RANGE OF ASSESSMENT FLEXIBILITY

Recommendation	% indicating this is a <b>high or medium</b> priority	% indicating this is a high priority	% indicating this is a medium priority	% indicating this is a low priority	% indicating they do not support this
Diploma assessment options must be available to all students.	<b>97</b>	80	17	3	0
Diploma assessment options must measure higher order thinking skills.	<b>97</b>	66	31	3	0
Students must have choice in the options used to satisfy the diploma assessment requirements.	<b>96</b>	77	19	5	0
Writing, including writing skills for real-world scenarios, must be an integral part of diploma assessment options.	<b>96</b>	55	41	3	2
Diploma assessment options must allow students to demonstrate competence in multiple ways.	<b>94</b>	81	13	6	0
Diploma assessment options must align with the culturally responsive-sustaining education framework.	<b>91</b>	61	30	5	5
Diploma assessment options must include performance-based assessments (PBAs).	<b>87</b>	56	31	9	3
Diploma assessment options must assess the attributes included in the portrait of a graduate.	<b>86</b>	63	23	14	0
Diploma assessment options must include capstone projects.	<b>78</b>	34	44	19	3
Diploma assessment options must include experiential learning.	<b>78</b>	44	34	19	3
Diploma assessment options must include industry certifications.	<b>69</b>	41	28	25	6
Diploma assessment options must include Advanced Placement (AP) exams.	<b>53</b>	28	25	17	30
Diploma assessment options must include International Baccalaureate (IB) exams.	<b>49</b>	27	22	27	25
Diploma assessment options must include Regents Exams.	<b>47</b>	22	25	28	25
Diploma assessment options must be attempted by the end of grade 10.	<b>41</b>	13	28	38	22

## APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDATIONS SURVEY RESULTS CNT'D

### PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENTS

Recommendation	% indicating this is a <b>high or medium</b> priority	% indicating this is a high priority	% indicating this is a medium priority	% indicating this is a low priority	% indicating they do not support this
Create State-developed rubric(s) for any performance-based assessments allowed as an option to satisfy the diploma assessment requirements.	<b>89</b>	72	17	8	3
Performance-based assessments should be permitted as an alternative to any diploma assessment required for graduation.	<b>87</b>	64	23	6	6
Performance-based assessments should only be permitted as an alternative to diploma assessments in science and social studies, and as a pathway.	<b>29</b>	13	16	16	56
Performance-based assessments should only be permitted as an alternative to the Regents Exam in English Language Arts (ELA) for graduation requirements, particularly because the ELA Regents is the only Regents Exam that may not be translated into other languages.	<b>17</b>	8	9	23	59

### OPTIONS FOR SPECIFIC STUDENTS

Recommendation	% indicating this is a <b>high or medium</b> priority	% indicating this is a high priority	% indicating this is a medium priority	% indicating this is a low priority	% indicating they do not support this
Diploma assessment options must meet the needs of all learners, including English language learners, students with disabilities, and other underserved populations.	<b>96</b>	94	2	5	0
Create more specific, tailored graduation requirements to address the unique circumstances of certain groups of students (e.g., non-compulsory age students, newcomer students, refugee students).	<b>87</b>	59	28	6	6
English language learners should have distinct assessment options which would only be available to students identified as English language learners.	<b>71</b>	23	48	14	14
Diploma assessment options should not have a separate pathway for students with disabilities.	<b>47</b>	25	22	20	33

## APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDATIONS SURVEY RESULTS CNT'D

### EXEMPTIONS

Recommendation	% indicating this is a <b>high or medium</b> priority	% indicating this is a high priority	% indicating this is a medium priority	% indicating this is a low priority	% indicating they do not support this
Provide exemptions from diploma assessment requirements for students with significant cognitive disabilities.	<b>94</b>	75	19	6	0
Provide exemptions from diploma assessment requirements for major life events and extenuating circumstances (e.g., medical conditions, death of a family member, trauma prior to sitting for a Regents Exam).	<b>81</b>	64	17	19	0
Pursue regulatory changes to allow the discretion to confer high school degrees posthumously.	<b>79</b>	63	16	16	6

### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Recommendation	% indicating this is a <b>high or medium</b> priority	% indicating this is a high priority	% indicating this is a medium priority	% indicating this is a low priority	% indicating they do not support this
Require that professional development plans include culturally responsive-sustaining education practices and pedagogy.	<b>95</b>	73	22	2	3
Review and revise NYS learning standards to emphasize higher-order skills and competencies (e.g., health education, communication, decision-making, time management, soft skills).	<b>95</b>	67	28	5	0
Require all NYS teacher preparation programs to provide instruction in culturally responsive-sustaining education (CRSE) practices and pedagogy.	<b>93</b>	80	13	5	3
Revise learning standards using a CRSE/DEI and accessibility lens in all subject areas, including history.	<b>92</b>	28	64	6	2
Change NYS learning standards to better align with college and career expectations and update for Family and Consumer Sciences, Health, Media Literacy, and climate education.	<b>86</b>	53	33	11	3

## APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDATIONS SURVEY RESULTS CNT'D

### ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE TO CONSIDER FOR THE FINAL REPORT

Some of the language received either indicated how recommendations may be implemented or included recommendations for things that are already in place. Commission members indicated their desire to include or exclude the language from the final report by voting:

- **Yes.** This language should be considered for inclusion in the Report on Graduation Measures.
- **No.** This language should not be included in the Report on Graduation Measures.

### HOW RECOMMENDATIONS MAY BE IMPLEMENTED

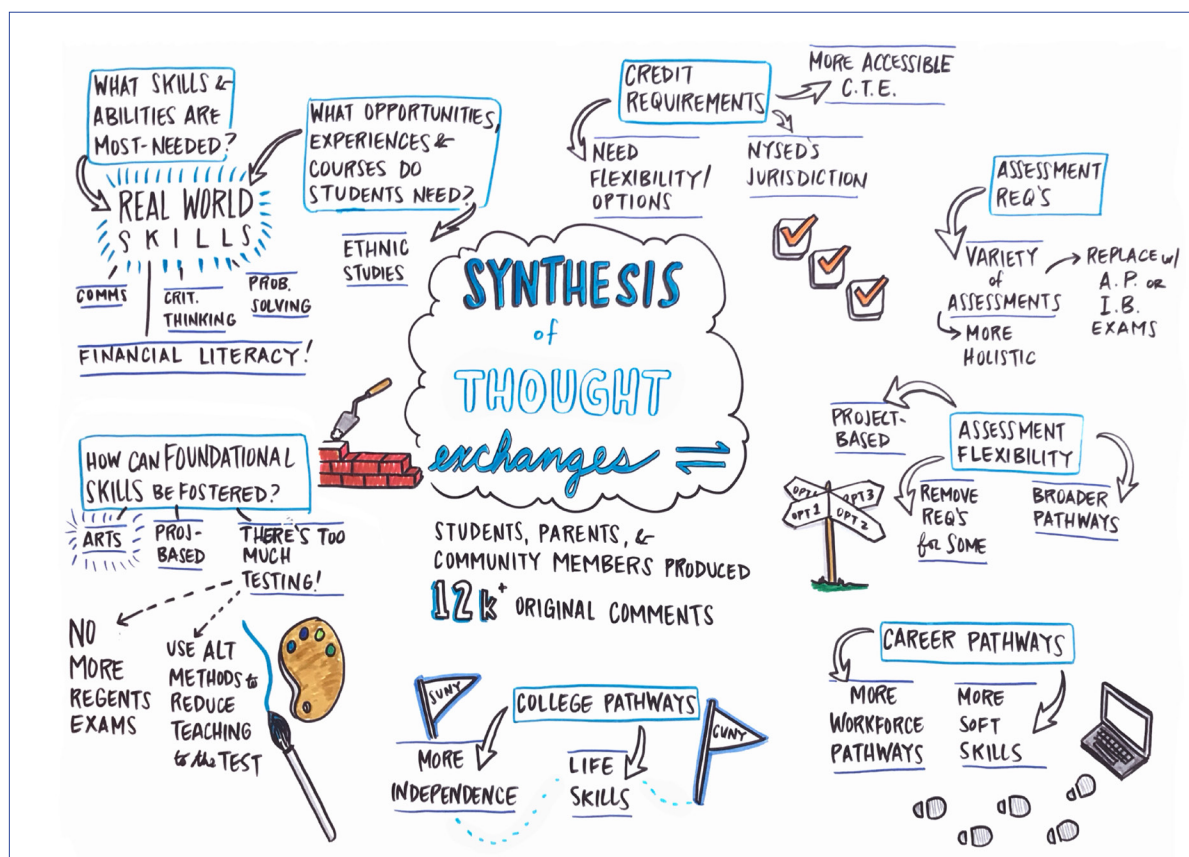
Recommendation	% Yes (include)
Replace deficit language such as safety nets with opportunities and access. Representatives of special populations need to be deeply involved in this conversation.	97
Advocacy and education to all stakeholders will be imperative in supporting the recommended paradigm shifts in assessment, credit distribution, and single diploma type.	94
State leaders should consider when New York State's diploma requirements will be reevaluated in the future (e.g., a future BRC and/or continued work for this BRC and NYSED). Policymakers should consider and plan now for how they will evaluate the impact of these proposed changes to graduation requirements, including the impact on access, opportunities, and outcomes for historically underrepresented and underserved student groups, in particular.	94
Adequate funding must be provided to local school districts to implement these important shifts.	91
Consider teacher certification; engage higher education about how they frame their delivery of training for new teachers; professional development for teachers in the system.	91
Engage higher education institutions around how they frame their teacher training and professional development offerings to support K-12 educators in helping their students attain the skills in a Portrait of a Graduate and meaningful credentials.	88
Renew commitment to literacy in all forms.	88
Convene P-20 teachers to develop performance-based assessment rubrics and create curated collection of exemplars.	86
Create family centers for students and families to provide support around graduation requirements.	73
Ensure flexible pathways for teacher certification in interdisciplinary instruction.	69
Rethink the format of the Regents Exam to include performance tasks, a test, and a portfolio that are combined to determine a single, summative score for each student; the new exams would not be a single day test but would still be used as a graduation requirement.	59
Update and redesign reference sheets for the current Regents Exams.	53
Redesign mandated Regents Exams (which must still meet federal requirements) to blend English language arts, mathematics, and science into one test.	45
Include more constructed responses within Regents Exams.	34

### RECOMMENDATIONS ALREADY IN PLACE

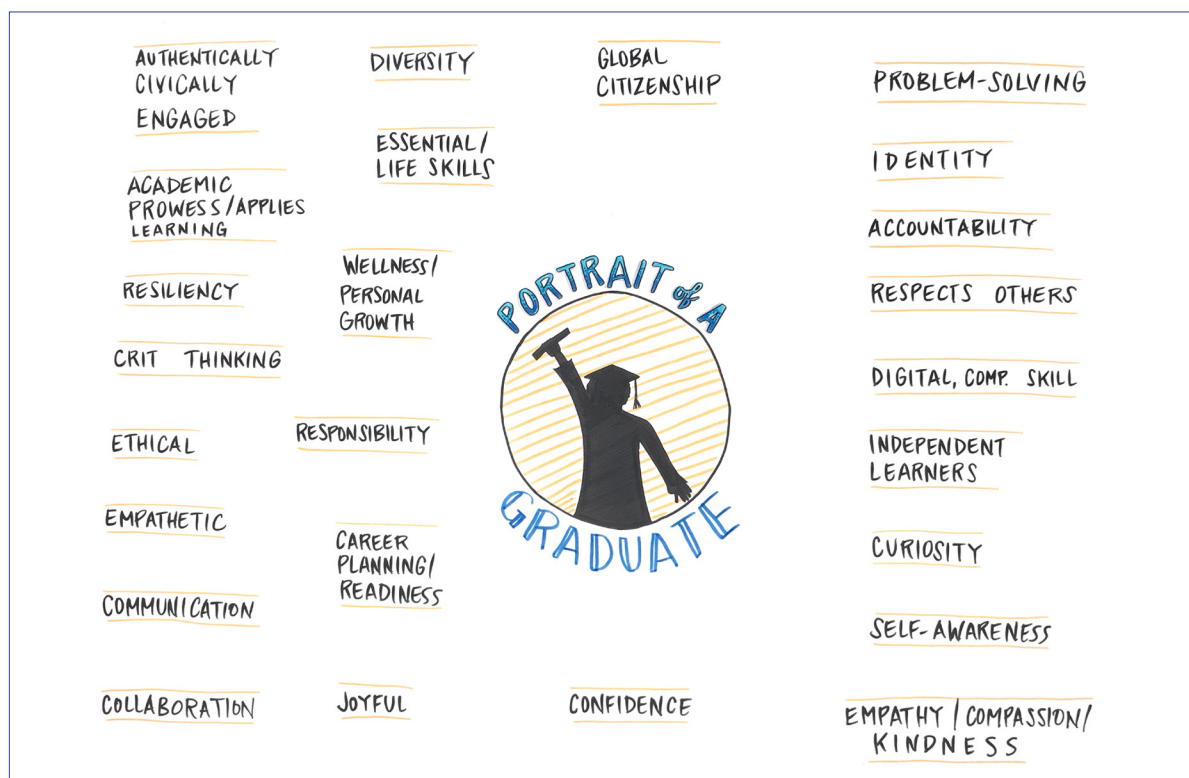
Recommendation	% Yes (include)
Offer and recognize relevant, rigorous, student-choice driven opportunities to earn credit, including robust career or technical education pathways, apprenticeships, internships and externships, dual enrollment, AP/IB programs, state seals (e.g., biliteracy, civics), credit for assets for bilingualism, and/or project-based learning, that will fit individual needs of all students.	98
Ensure the fine and performing arts is embedded into required credit courses.	81
Decouple timeline to graduate from credit attainment (i.e., students could take 3-6 years to graduate) to reflect students' abilities to achieve their academic goals.*	78

## APPENDIX C:

# Graphic Recording Artist's Depictions of July Convening



**Figure 11.** Collective Next, LLC, graphic facilitator's Depiction of Synthesis of ThoughtExchanges



**Figure 12.** Collective Next, LLC, graphic facilitator's Depiction of Portrait of a Graduate

## APPENDIX D:

# Blue Ribbon Commission Members

\* Denotes Steering Committee Member

**Jaan Aarismaa**

*Welding Technology Teacher*  
Delaware-Chenango-Madison-  
Otsego BOCES

**Hafid Aburto**

*Student*  
Grover Cleveland High School  
(NYCDOE)

**Francine Almash**

*Adjunct Professor*  
Center for Worker Education, City  
College of New York, CUNY

**Richard Altabe**

*Lower School Principal, Executive  
Vice President of Institutional  
Advancement*  
Hebrew Academy of Long Beach

**Elizabeth Angeles\***

*Vice President, Advocacy*  
United Way of New York City

**Stephen Beovich**

*Superintendent*  
Mount Pleasant Cottage School  
Union Free School District

**Carlos Berrios**

*Student*  
Newburgh Free Academy West  
Campus

**Donna Bonanno**

*Principal*  
Alice Austen School (NYCDOE)

**Parker Booth**

*Student*  
LaFayette Junior-Senior High School

**Dr. David Brown**

*Director of Graduate Studies*  
LeMoyne College

**Samantha Bruno\***

*Student (Recent Graduate)*  
Eastport South Manor Junior/  
Senior High School and the Bixhorn  
Technical Center at the Eastern  
Long Island Academy for Applied  
Technology (Eastern Suffolk BOCES)

**Dr. Dia Bryant**

*Executive Director*  
Education Trust – New York

**Kerri Bullock**

*Assistant Superintendent for  
Instructional Support Services &  
Leadership*  
Broome-Tioga BOCES

**Dr. Eric Byrne**

*Superintendent*  
Rye City School District

**Dr. Joyce Carr**

*Supervisor of Special Education and  
Support Services*  
Elmira City School District

**Amanda Centor**

*Special Education Teacher*  
PS 182 (NYCDOE)

**Pagee Cheung**

*Co-Executive Director and Founding  
Principal*  
Math, Engineering, and Science  
Academy (MESA) Charter High School

**Dr. Alexandria Connally**

*Assistant Director*  
Southern Westchester BOCES

**Timothy Cox**

*Assistant Superintendent,  
Instructional Support Services*  
Cattaraugus-Allegany BOCES

**Dr. Gladys Cruz**

*District Superintendent*  
Questar III BOCES

**Juliet Eisenstein**

*Assistant Director, Postsecondary  
Readiness Project*  
Advocates for Children of New York

**Dr. Howard Everson**

*Senior Research Scientist, Center for  
Education Research & Innovation*  
SRI International

**Kristie Farr**

*Theater Educator*  
Indian River Central School District

**Kim Fontana**

*Superintendent*  
Pawling Central School District

**Sherée Gibson**

*Former Chair of the Chancellor's  
Parent Advisory Council and  
Member of the Title I Committee of  
Practitioners*

**Dr. Jordan Gonzalez**

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Long Island RBERN

**Tricia González**

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Rochester City School District

**Dr. Stanley Harper**

*Superintendent*  
Salmon River Central School District

**Dr. Tolga Hayali**

*Superintendent*  
Science Academies of New York  
Charter Schools

**Dr. Catherine Huber**

*District Superintendent*  
Otsego Northern Catskills BOCES

**Dr. David Hursh**

*Professor, Warner Graduate School of  
Education*  
University of Rochester

**Jo James**

*Special Education Teacher*  
WSWHE BOCES

**Dr. Brian Jones**

*Director of Center for Educations and  
Schools*  
New York Public Library

**Cynthia Jones**

*Principal on Special Assignment*  
Niagara Falls City School District

**Dr. Lorna Lewis\***

*Superintendent*  
Malverne Union Free School District

## APPENDIX D: BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION MEMBERS CONT'D

**Daniel Kobina Lindsay**

Mathematics Teacher, Peer  
Collaborative Team Teacher Lead  
Stephen Decatur M.S. 035, District 16,  
NYCDOE

**Susan Lipman**

Board Trustee  
Eastern Suffolk BOCES

**Dr. Timothy Lisante\***

Superintendent (Retired)  
New York City Department of  
Education

**Donna Lobato**

Principal  
New Dawn Charter High School

**Tamara Mariotti\***

Coordinator of Accessibility Resources  
Mohawk Valley Community College

**Stephen Marositz**

Associate Superintendent for  
Teaching and Learning (Former  
Position) Archdiocese of New York

**Dr. Jeffrey Matteson**

District Superintendent  
Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga BOCES

**Winonah McCoy**

Instructional Coach  
LaFayette Central School District

**Alprentice McCutchen\***

Social Studies Teacher  
New Rochelle High School

**Melissa Melkonian**

Founder and Executive Director  
American Dream Charter School

**Frankie Miranda**

President  
Hispanic Federation

**Dr. Fatima Morrell**

Associate Superintendent, Office of  
Culturally & Linguistically Responsive  
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Buffalo Public Schools

**David Mumper**

Resource Specialist  
Southern Westchester BOCES/  
Hudson Valley RBERN

**Dr. Edward Placke**

Executive Director (Retired)  
Green Chimneys

**Michael Prayor**

Superintendent  
Brooklyn South HS NYC Public  
Schools

**Dr. Edwin Quezada**

Superintendent  
Yonkers Public Schools

**Carolyn Quintana**

Deputy Chancellor of Teaching and  
Learning Opportunities  
New York City Department of  
Education

**Amber Rangel Mooney**

Vice President and Director of  
Workforce Development  
Empire State Development

**Roberto Rijos**

NYS PTA; Vice President and Chief  
Information Officer  
Konica Minolta Healthcare Americas,  
Inc.

**Linda Romano**

CTE Health Science Education  
Teacher  
Newburgh Enlarged City School  
District

**Dr. Christopher Rosa**

President and Chief Executive Officer  
The Viscardi Center and Henry  
Viscardi School

**Dr. Sagrario Rudecindo-O'Neill\***

Assistant Superintendent of  
Instruction and Student Support  
Beacon City School District

**Stephen Sireci, Ph.D.\***

Distinguished Professor  
University of Massachusetts Amherst

**Robert Snyder**

President  
NYS Loving Education at Home

**Dr. Andrea Soonachan**

Dean of K-16 Initiatives  
The City University of New York

**Dr. Marion Terenzio**

President  
State University of New York College  
of Agriculture and Technology at  
Cobleskill

**Terjuana Teruel**

Principal  
Universal School

**Andres Torres**

Head of Guidance/College & Career  
Counselor  
Manhattan Bridges High School  
(NYCDOE)

**Luis Torres**

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Community School 55  
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K-12 Director of Math, Science, and  
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Rocky Point Union Free School  
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**Christopher White**

Deputy Commissioner for Workforce  
Development  
New York State Department of Labor

**Kelly Whitney-Rivera\***

Director of Counseling  
Valley Stream Central High School

**Bobson Wong**

Math Teacher'  
Bayside High School

## APPENDIX E:

# NYSED Staff Support Team

 Denotes NYSED Blue Ribbon Commission Team Members

### **Tanya Amodio-Kovacs**

Supervisor, Education Programs

### **Marybeth Casey**

Assistant Commissioner (Retired),  
Office of Curriculum & Instruction  
and Early Learning

### **Kimberly Charis**

Past Project Manager

### **Keshia Clukey**

Assistant Commissioner for  
Public Affairs

### **David Coffey**

Associate in Education  
Improvement Services

### **Catherine Coons**

Associate in Instructional Services

### **LoriAnn Curtin**

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Support

### **Emily DeSantis**

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for Public Affairs

### **Mary Drzonsc**

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Commission on Graduation Measures

### **Andrea Faoro**

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### **Ashleigh Farley**

Associate in Instructional Services

### **Dawn Graham**

Associate in Instructional Services

### **Ron Gill**

Assistant in Education  
Improvement Services

### **Emily Goodenough**

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and Policy

### **Gina Handy**

Examinations Editor

### **Jason Harmon**

Deputy Commissioner P12  
Operational Support

### **Liz Hurley**

Manager, Information Technology  
Services

### **Dechelle Johnson**

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Instructional Support

### **Shibu Joseph**

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### **Chris Kenneston**

Information Technology Specialist 3

### **Hannah Leverenz**

P12 Instructional Support Intern

### **Shannon Logan**

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### **Nicole Marschilok**

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### **Jennifer Mickel**

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### **Melissa Montague**

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### **JP O'Hare**

Deputy Director of Communications

### **Dr. Santosha Oliver**

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of Standards and Instruction

### **Lisa Pingelski**

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### **Christine Radez**

Associate in Instructional Services

### **Matthew Ramnes**

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Management Services

### **Kelsey Roman**

Associate in Instructional Services

### **Christina Ryan**

Assistant in Instructional Services

### **Amalia Schiff**

Chief of Staff, P-12 Instructional  
Support

### **David W. Seligman**

Associate in Instructional Services

### **Brielyn Smith**

Assistant in Education Improvement  
Services

### **Erik Sweet**

Executive Director, Office of Early  
Learning

### **Andrea Vamvas**

Associate in Instructional Services

### **Laura Walker**

Assistant to the Commissioner

### **Dr. Zachary Warner**

Assistant Commissioner, Office of  
Assessment

### **Lynne Wells**

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### **Dr. Kimberly Young Wilkins**

Deputy Commissioner (Retired),  
P-12 Instructional Support

### **Dharma Wong**

P12 Instructional Support Intern

### **Dr. Diane Wynne**

Executive Director,  
Office of Diversity, Equity and  
Inclusion



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