

# Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma

Coordinator: Ashley Grant • agrant@advocatesforchildren.org • 212-822-9548

## Statement of Purpose

The Coalition for Multiple Pathways to a Diploma is comprised of more than 65 members, including advocacy organizations, educators, and families across New York State, representing a broad cross-section of students, including students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and economically disadvantaged students. We have come together to urge the creation of a coherent and comprehensive New York State graduation structure that includes multiple pathways to a diploma, each of which holds all students to high expectations, provides them with quality instruction, and opens doors to career and post-secondary education opportunities. We are united by the concern that high-stakes standardized exit exams act as an unnecessary barrier to high school graduation for students who have otherwise mastered New York State standards and are college or career ready. We believe that measuring college- and career-readiness requires valuing multiple and equally valid ways to assess the skills needed for success in the workplace and higher education and supporting a diversity of learning styles and goals. We are also united by the concern that access to emerging instructional programs/pathways, such as Career and Technical Education (CTE), which have been shown to improve student engagement and reduce dropout rates, has been limited for many students.

## Policy Goals

We call upon New York State to take all of the following steps in support of multiple pathways to a diploma:

- **Develop and support performance-based assessments.** In lieu of each Regents exam, all students should be given the option of demonstrating their knowledge and skills through State-developed performance-based assessments or State-approved performance-based assessment systems, completing a series of tasks/projects in contexts that are familiar and relevant to their high school experiences. Schools with demonstrated capacity to develop performance-based systems should continue to be supported. We also recommend that New York State review the experiences of other states that have provided students with performance-based options in lieu of standardized tests.
- **Change the number of exit exams required to graduate from 5 to 2.** The federal government does not require students to pass exit exams in order to graduate from high school. In fact, only 24 states currently require students to pass exit exams to graduate. Of those states that require exit exams, New York State has some of the most onerous testing requirements. We recommend that the State require no more than the English Regents and one Math Regents for graduation. All other Regents exams would remain optional and available for students who choose to take them in order to graduate with a Regents Diploma with Honors or Advanced Regents Diploma. The number, types, and sequence of credits required to graduate would not be affected. Students still would have to fulfill the same course requirements to receive a high school diploma.
- **Build more coherence and flexibility into the current system.** We encourage the State to continue to expand and/or simplify access to the already-existing appeals processes. Students should be allowed to appeal their scores on all of the Regents exams. We encourage New York State to examine the experiences of other states, which offer a variety of appeals options.
- **Ensure access to emerging instructional programming/pathways for all students.** As the State looks to expand pathways to graduation that require instruction in Career and Technical Education, the humanities, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), and other programs shown to promote student engagement and advancement towards college or career readiness, it must ensure that such programs are accessible to diverse student populations, including multilingual learners and students with disabilities.

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- **Ensure transparency in communications and monitor all aspects of the multiple pathways system.**  
Communication is vital for ensuring student access to any established pathway, including the appeals that are already available to students. The State must provide students, families, and school professionals clear, concise, and easy-to-follow information on all of the alternative pathways that are available to students to receive a high school diploma. In addition, monitoring student outcomes with respect to each pathway is crucial to guarantee that the pathways are being implemented correctly. In order to promote accountability, the State must collect and disclose detailed outcomes data, including usage data on the specific diplomas and the pathways that students have taken to earn them, as well as data that allow for comparison of outcomes across multiple student groups

## Members of the Coalition Include:

Advocates for Children of New York • Alliance for Quality Education • Annenberg Institute for School Reform • ARISE Coalition • Asperger Syndrome & High Functioning Autism Association • David C. Bloomfield, Esq., Professor of Educational Leadership, Law & Policy, Brooklyn College and The CUNY Graduate Center • Bronx Independent Living Services • Brooklyn Defender Services • Brooklyn Center for the Disabled • Business Teachers Association of New York State • Campaign for Tomorrow's Workforce • Capital Region Refugee Roundtable • Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York • Citizens' Committee for Children of New York • Lisa Finnerty Coggi, Parent/Advocate • Community Service Society • Council for a Strong America • Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies • Valerie DeClara, Parent • Della DeKay JD, EdD • Max Donatelli, Family Advocate • Irja Estrella, Parent • Families Together in New York State • Ann Marie Fitzpatrick, Parent • Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project • Jennifer Ghidui, Big Picture Learning • Michael Godino, Advocate • Good Shepherd Services • Roberta Grogan, Parent/Advocate • Lori Gummanow, Parent/Special Educator • Meghan Healy • Shelley Hubal, Parent • INCLUDEnyc • Muronji Inman-McCraw • Internationals Network for Public Schools • Lawyers for Children, Inc. • Learning Disabilities Association of New York State • Jill Lewis-Flood, Parent/PIP Member • Long Island Advocacy Center • Long Island Communities of Practice • Chris McNell, Special Education Supervisor/Principal • Diana Medina Mendez, Parent • Mark Anthony Mendez • Mental Health Association of New York City • Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools • Namita Modasra • New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation • New York Council of Administrators of Special Education • New York Immigration Coalition • New York Performance Standards Consortium • New York State Association for Bilingual Education • New York State Coalition of 853 Schools • New York State Community of Practice on Family, School and Community Collaboration • New York State Disabilities Advocacy Association and Network • New York State Independent Living Council, Inc. (NYSILC) • New York State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (NYTESOL) • NY Stop Grad HST • Regina Paleau, Parent • Parent to Parent New York, Inc. • Evelyn Perez, Parent • Catherine Phillips-Russ, Baker Victory Services • Sharon Poole, Education for Everyone Consultant • Queens Community House • Lynn Russo, Parent • SCO Family of Services • Tracey Shannon, Parent • Bruce A. Shields, PhD, Associate Professor of Education, Daemen College • Sinergia Metropolitan Parent Center • Starbridge • United We Stand • Christian Villenas, PhD • Marcia Vogel, Parent/Advocate • YOUTH POWER!