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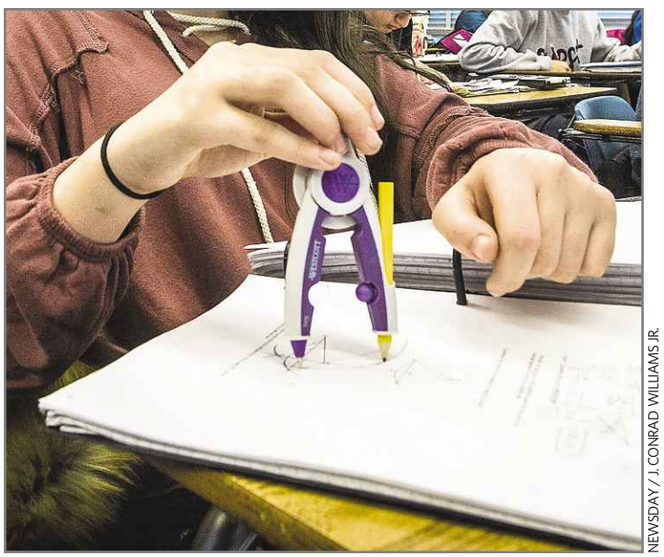
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Regents exams to remain staple

Tests will satisfy fed requirements for NYS students

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Regents exams and preparatory classes will not be necessary after the tests are phased out as graduation requirements and replaced.

High school students in New York will still continue to take Regents exams through 2030 to meet federal accountability requirements, even if the tests are phased out as a requirement for graduation next year, state officials said Monday.

Federal law mandates students are tested at least once in English, math and science during their high school years. New York also requires high schoolers to be assessed in social studies.

State Education Department officials had previously said a new suite of assessments would be developed to replace the Regents exams to satisfy the federal requirement. On Monday, officials announced at a Board of Regents meeting that the first administration of these new assessments would not occur until spring 2030.

"It ensures that we can work with our education community [and] develop thoughtful, coherent assessment systems that really will support the vision of New York Inspires and have everything fit together," Zachary Warner, an assistant commissioner at the state Education Department, said Monday.

Initiative impact

New York Inspires refers to the state initiative focused on changing how high school students are assessed for graduation. Under its proposed vision, the Class of 2028 won't have to pass Regents exams to graduate, as they have for decades.

State education officials have said the requirement hurts students who are not good test-takers and have argued a new educational system is needed that will be more equitable and relevant to what students will need to succeed after high school.

Officials said Monday the new 2030 time frame for assessments will not impact the phasing out of the Regents exams as a requirement for a diploma.

Some Regents members acknowledged the uncertainty some have about the initiative.

"This is going to be super confusing to parents, especially those parents of eighth graders, ninth graders as well," Regent Shiro Tanikawa said after department officials presented the 2030 timeline. "So we should really think about what the best messaging is."

Assessment concerns

The state has yet to release specific rubrics for what will replace the Regents exams as a graduation requirement. And on Monday, some educators raised concern over the prospect of new state assessments.

Creating new assessments statewide can be costly, said Timothy Eagen, superintendent of the Kings Park school district. Administering new tests also takes time away from instruction and consumes resources, he said.

"I don't think it makes any sense to conjure up new exams to meet the federal requirement," Eagen said.

He noted in particular the funding for the exams and the loss of instructional time.

"To use the exams that already exist, I think, [would be] smart," he said.

Tanikawa also expressed reluctance. "I really was not very keen on yet another set of tests coming down the pike, which we might be doing," she said. "But I think this is the right approach to address the requirements."

Bob Vecchio, executive director of the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association, acknowledged educators still have a lot of questions over the initiative's rollout but said he believed the proposed changes were necessary.

"I think what we are going to do to prove students are ready for the next step is better than what we've been doing in the past," he said.

Eagen said parents should regard the Regents exams as they have in the past, since many high schools use the tests as part of a student's course grade, even though the state Education Department does not recommend they do so.

"The pressure is off in terms of graduation," Eagen said. "But the exam should still be business as usual in terms of being a measure of what you learned in that particular class. It's just like a final exam."