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**BOARD OF  
EDUCATION**

**The New Paltz Central School District Board of Education's  
Position on Graduation Requirements for the Class of 2022**

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**Position:**

New graduation requirements, set to take effect beginning with the Class of 2022, will deny a Regents diploma to more than 100,000 students annually. This decision is not supported by any empirical evidence, is conceptually flawed, and is misaligned with real-world outcomes. The New Paltz Board of Education calls upon the Board of Regents to immediately rescind the new requirements.

**Background:**

As part of the phase-in of the Common Core Learning Standards, the Board of Regents has approved new graduation requirements for the Class of 2022. Those requirements, as outlined in a [NYSED memo](#)<sup>1</sup>:

*"Specifically, the class of 2022 (i.e., students who first enter grade 9 in the 2018-19 school year) would be the first group of students required to pass Common Core Regents Exams (ELA and one exam in math) at the aspirational college- and career-readiness level (comparable to the existing 75/80), indicating that they met Common Core course-level expectations."*

That passing level is [defined](#)<sup>2</sup> as a score of 4 on the Common Core Regents exams:

*"Level 4: Meets Common Core expectations (first required for Regents Diploma purposes with the Class of 2022)"*

**The New Paltz Central School District Board of Education objects to this requirement for three primary reasons:**

1. Current results from Common Core Regents exams indicate that Level 4 is not reflective of college-readiness.
2. Current results from Common Core Regents exams indicate that Level 4 is not aligned with the Regents Aspirational Performance Measure. This misalignment runs counter to the claim that Level 4 is "comparable to the existing 75/80".
3. The initiative fails to recognize the legitimacy of non-academic post-secondary pursuits.

## **Issue #1: Common Core Regents exam Level 4 does not reflect college-readiness.**

To evaluate this claim we must first define two data points: an estimate of college-readiness as defined by Common Core Regents exams and an estimate of college-readiness reflected by real-world post-secondary outcomes.

For the Class of 2022 to meet the college-ready benchmarks, and therefore graduate, they must score Level 4 or above on the Common Core ELA Regents exam and Level 4 on at least one Common Core math Regents exam.

[2015 rates scoring 4 or above](#)<sup>3</sup>:

ELA (Common Core) = 57.0%

Algebra I (Common Core) = 22.9%

Geometry (Common Core) = 24.0%

Since the student must reach Level 4 in both ELA and math we must look at the lower of the two categories. How can we estimate the number “passing” at least one without access to student data? One method is to examine the relationship between the non-Common Core Regents exams and the current graduation rate. Via this method we come to the estimation formula of: (Geometry Rate + (10% of Algebra Rate)) = Graduation Rate. We can use [current non-Common Core Regents exam results](#)<sup>3</sup> to test this method:

Geometry = 71.6%

Integrated Algebra = 61.6%

$$(71.6\% + (61.6\% * 0.10)) = 77.8\%$$

The most [recent graduation rate](#)<sup>4</sup> is 78.1%.

Using that same method for the Common Core exams:

$$(24.0\% + (22.9\% * 0.10)) = 26.3\%$$

**The estimated graduation rate for the Class of 2022 is 26.3%.**

Now we'll determine the real-world college-readiness rate based on actual post-secondary outcomes: lack of need for remedial college coursework and persistence (i.e. still enrolled the fall after initial enrollment).

Average remediation rates (percentage taking at least 1 remedial course) for the [5 most recent years with data](#)<sup>5</sup> are as follows:

4-year colleges = 11.2%

2-year colleges = 49.9%

The most recent [post-secondary plans](#)<sup>6</sup> indicate the following enrollment:

4-year college enrollment = 87,764

2-year college enrollment = 56,040

Given these figures, the number of non-remediated students is:

$$(87,764 * (1.00 - 0.112)) = 77,934$$
$$(56,040 * (1.00 - 0.499)) = 28,076$$

106,010 total non-remediated college students.

Compared to the [total number of students](#)<sup>6</sup> (completers and non-completers; 210,682 students) we come to a college-readiness rate of 50.3%.

As a secondary measure, let's also look at "persistence". [Average persistence rates for the most recent 6 years with data](#)<sup>5</sup>:

Non-remedial students = 77.3%  
Remedial students = 58.7%

Earlier we calculated the number non-remediated students. The number of remediated students is simply the difference between the total enrolled population and the non-remediated population:

Non-remedial students = 106,010  
Remedial students = 37,794

Applying the relevant persistence rates we come to the following numbers of persistent students:

Non-remedial =  $(106,010 * 0.773) = 81,946$   
Remedial =  $(37,794 * 0.587) = 22,185$

Total = 104,131

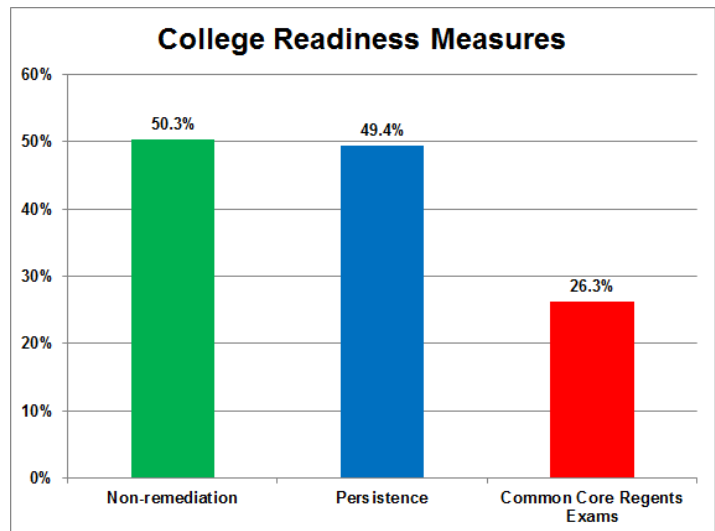
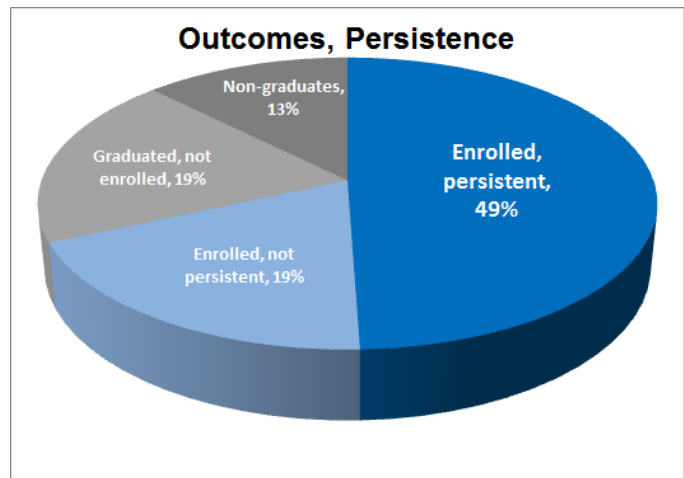
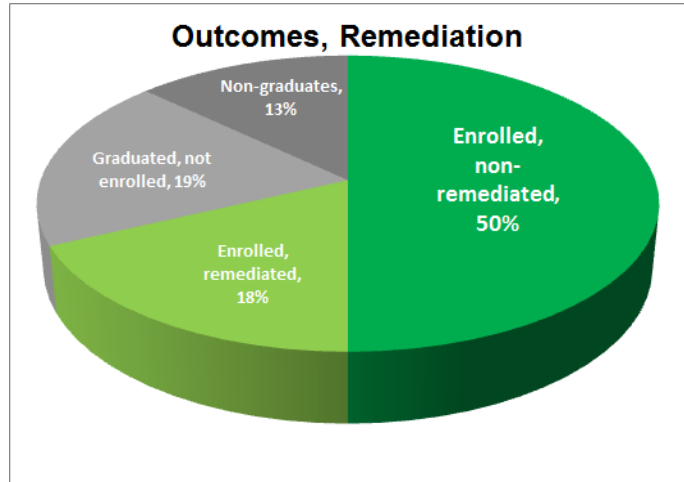
Compared to the total count of students, persistence yields a college-readiness rate of 49.4%.

To summarize:

Common Core Regents exam reflection of college-readiness = 26.3%

Real-world reflection of college-readiness based on non-remediation = 50.3%

Real-world reflection of college-readiness based on persistence = 49.4%

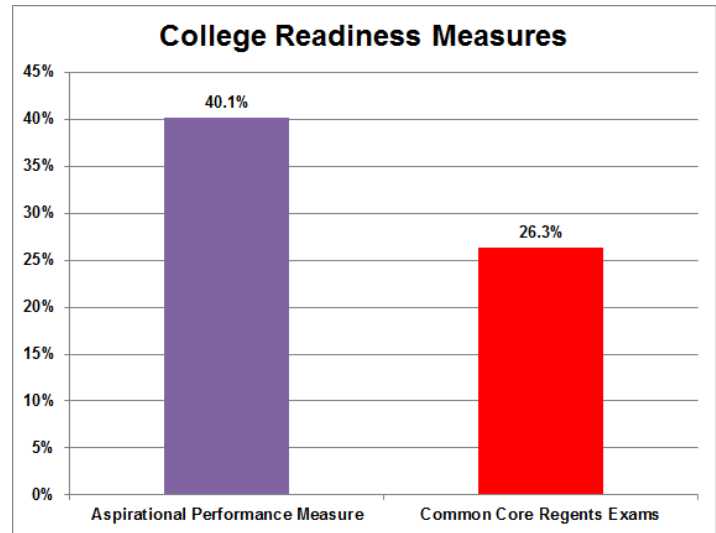


Our conclusion is that a Level 4 on Common Core Regents exams is not remotely reflective of college-readiness.

**Issue #2: Common Core Regents exam Level 4 does not correspond with the Regents Aspirational Performance Measure.**

The phrase “comparable to the existing 75/80” in [NYSED’s memo](#)<sup>1</sup> refers directly to the Regents ELA/Math Aspirational Performance Measure (APM). That measure is [defined](#)<sup>7</sup> “as the percentage of students in the cohort who graduated with a score 80 or better on a math Regents exam and 75 or better on the English Regents exam”.

The [most recent APM Rate](#)<sup>8</sup> is 40.1%. Compared to the previously calculated 26.3% readiness rate indicated by Common Core Regents exams we see further evidence of misalignment.



**Issue #3: These requirements narrow accepted post-secondary options for students.**

The exclusive focus on college-readiness (NYSED has never advanced a firm definition of career-ready) delegitimizes the [post-secondary choices](#)<sup>9</sup> of 40,000 students annually, including the 3,439 that chose to enter the military and the 11,856 that chose to directly enter the workforce. It is especially punitive to students with disabilities who are three times more likely to directly enter the workforce and four times more likely to pursue alternative post-secondary educational options<sup>13</sup>.

A [2013 NSYED presentation on college- and career-readiness](#)<sup>10</sup> identified three domains of college-readiness: core academic knowledge & skills, career-specific knowledge & skills, and key behaviors & attitudes. The revised graduation requirement only addresses the academic domain. Even if one advances the argument that the academic focus extends to the career-readiness domain, no one can assert that these requirements assess key behaviors & attitudes, defined as: “the non-cognitive, socio-emotional knowledge and skills that help students successfully transition from high school to college or careers.”

That same presentation also reveals an economically-focused agenda driving this graduation requirement. The following points are advanced to explain why readiness matters:

- “[The] Labor Market Is More Demanding”
- “Education pays in higher overall earnings and lower unemployment rates.”
- “Underperformance Costs \$1 Trillion”
- “If New York increased its college attainment rate by just one percent... the state would capture a \$17.5 billion Talent Dividend.”

There is not a single point made to address the needs and desires of actual students. Our K-12 public schools are not a workforce training program.

The college-readiness justification is also advanced by benchmarking results against 4th and 8th grade NAEP results and SAT performance. Using one test to justify another test is a dubious evidentiary method. Even the College Board, creators of the SAT, recognize that [high school GPA is best individual predictor of college success](#)<sup>11</sup>. Benchmarking college-readiness to 4th and 8th grade NAEP scores is especially curious, considering that The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), administrators of NAEP, have [specifically piloted a program](#)<sup>12</sup> to measure readiness based on 12th grade NAEP scores, not 4th and 8th grade scores. They also [advise caution](#)<sup>12</sup> when considering using the 12th grade scores:

*“The Governing Board continues to conduct research on NAEP and twelfth-grade academic preparedness for postsecondary education and training. Therefore, these estimates are being reported on a provisional basis.”*

### **Conclusion:**

Graduation requirements for the Class of 2022 and beyond are not only misguided in their purpose, they are also misaligned with the stated goal of college-readiness. The statewide graduation rate will plummet from 78% to 26%, resulting in the denial of a Regents diploma to over 100,000 students annually.

The goal of the initiative -- college-readiness -- is being driven by external economic concerns rather than the diverse educational needs and desires of our students. That goal is poorly assessed by the State's chosen instrument: Common Core Regents exams. The exams indicate that 26% of students are ready for college, but real-world post-secondary outcomes place that figure at approximately 50%.

The consequences of this policy are not as far off as they seem. Some members of the Class of 2022 will take Regents Algebra I in the 2017-18 school year and will be under pressure to score 4 or higher.

The New Paltz Central School District Board of Education favors an approach to graduation requirements that focuses on the following:

1. An educational goal that focuses exclusively on the needs and interests of students, not on the desires of higher education and employment concerns.
2. Graduation requirements that recognize multiple pathways to post-secondary success.
3. Academic preparedness measures based on empirical research and aligned with real-world outcomes.

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