



## NYIC State 2016 Policy & Budget Priorities

### Multiple Pathways

#### Recommendation

Continue expansion of multiple pathways to a high school diploma in New York State.

- **Develop performance-based assessments.** In lieu of Regents exams, the State Education Department and Board of Regents should allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through performance-based assessments, completing a series of tasks/projects in contexts that are relevant to their high school experiences.
- **Reduce the required number of exit exams from 5 to 3.** The State Education Department and Board of Regents should change exit exam requirements to require only one Math, English, and Science Regents exam, and leave other exams available for students who wish to graduate with an Advanced Regents Diploma or a Regents Diploma with Honors.
- **Invest additional \$65m to Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs.** The Governor and State Legislature should support the State Board of Regents' request for an additional \$65 million for CTE funding which will ensure the programs are accessible and accommodating for ELL students.

#### History

- **2015:** New York State Board of Regents increased English language learners' (ELLs') access to a high school diploma by recognizing that some students might be qualified to graduate but still struggle with the English Regents exam. The move allows recently arrived ELLs who score 55-61 on the English Regents exam to receive a high school diploma through an appeals process, as long as they meet additional requirements. Currently all students who score 62-64 on any Regents exam are eligible to receive a diploma via this appeals process.

#### Community Need and Background

There are approximately **218,000 English Language Learners (ELLs)** enrolled in high schools across the State. ELLs face formidable challenges, mastering a new language and new content, all while adjusting to a new culture and navigating a complex school system. Many ELLs also **live in poverty** and are more likely to have **parents with limited schooling**. Approximately every **2 out of 5 ELLs stay in school beyond their fourth year** while **21.3% of ELLs will drop out of high school by their fourth year**. Lastly, although emerging programs such as CTE programs have been shown to reduce dropout rates and improve student engagement, **gaps remain in providing access to CTE programs and adequate language supports for ELL students currently in CTE programs**.

New York State's rigorous exit exam requirements present yet another barrier to this already disadvantaged group, leaving ELLs who have otherwise mastered New York State standards and demonstrated career and college-readiness **unable to graduate from high school**, having drastic implications for their futures. The **four-year graduation rate for ELLs is a meager 34%**, less than half the graduation rate for all students, and has dropped two years in a row.

#### Opportunity and Talking Points

Allowing ELLs to demonstrate career and college-readiness in valid, State approved ways will not diminish the quality of instruction in schools or affect the number of credits required to graduate, but will only be beneficial for immigrant communities, but also for New York State as a whole.

- NYS spends **\$19,076 per-pupil** and 15.2% of all students staying into a fifth year. By improving graduation rates and ensuring students graduate on time, NYS could approximately save **\$642 million in additional yearly NYS expenditures per cohort**.
- Individuals without a high school diploma in NYS face **unemployment rates that are 50% higher** than the overall state unemployment rate. Opening up pathways to a diploma will help to prevent dropouts and increase chances for ELLs to create better futures for themselves, while producing valuable tax revenue and contributing to the economy.
- Enabling ELLs to demonstrate their skills and knowledge through multiple pathways demonstrates that NYS **values a diversity of learning styles** and talents that immigrant students bring to the table.

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