
**New York State Common Core Regents Exams Discussion Paper
November 2015 update**

Should the New York State Education Department (NYSED) do more to ensure that students, especially English language learners and students with disabilities, succeed with the transition to the Common Core Regents Exams.

By

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- **For the high school transition to the Common Core Standards, NYSED designed the new tests and scoring with a goal of maintaining comparable passing rates, but 8th grade NYS Math and ELA test results show this is highly unlikely:** One of the main New York Education Department (NYSED) policy decisions for the transition to the Common Core Regents Exams was that the new Algebra 1 and ELA would have similar pass rates with the expired exams (Integrated Algebra and Comprehensive English): a score of 65 or higher. This update offers new data and analysis showing that this goal was highly unlikely to occur during the past two years of Common Core Regents administrations. Since the first group of 9th graders entered high school in the fall of 2013 to the present, this goal of comparable passing rates will not be achieved unless school districts are encouraged (and given funding) to undertake intensive efforts to help students with disabilities, English language learners and other at risk students. Statewide, around 70,000 *more* public high school students are now at risk of failing the Math and/or English Regents exams.

- **An early warning system for the Common Core Algebra 1 and ELA Regents exam pass rate has been in place since the summer of 2013. Why won't NYSED use it to help incoming high school students at risk of failing the Regents?** The test scores for the New York State Common Core Grades 3 to 8 ELA and Math test (first time taken in 2013) provide a very important predictor for performance in high school and passing rates on the Regents Exams. NYSED defines Level 1 as not on track for graduation. When comparing NYS Common Core Math Test scores for 8th Grade students with the pass rates for the Integrated Algebra Regents Exam, the passing rate dropped by 14% for students with disabilities and 17% for English language learners. When comparing NYS Common Core ELA Test scores for 8th Grade students with pass rates for the Comprehensive English Regents Exam, the passing rate dropped by 18% for students with disabilities and 20% for English language learners. The 8th grade test results from 2013, 2014 and 2015 should have prompted NYSED to encourage all school districts to ramp up efforts to help these two at risk groups to succeed with the new Algebra 1 and ELA Common Core Regents Exams. This red flag now applies to the upcoming June 2016 Regents Common Core only exam administration.

- **June 2015 administration Common Core Regents Exam results:** The just released June 2015 administration Common Core test results offer strong validation for the usefulness of the NYS Math and ELA exam (taken in 7th or 8th Grade) as a predictor of high school performance. See **page 13** for full discussion and scores comparison.

- **If NYSED offered more detailed data on 8th grade student test scores, high schools would know how far the goal line is for incoming Level I test score students:** A Level 1 test score means student understanding and knowledge of academic content for their grade is “well below proficient” and they are not on track for graduation. However, there is a wide range of numerical scores a student can get within Level 1 from a low 100 to a high of 283. For example, in 2015, 40% of 8th graders that took the NYS Math Test scored somewhere inside the Level 1 range for the Math Exam. But where within Level 1 did students score? Did most students score closer to the high of 283 (on the border of Level 2), somewhere in the middle range or a much lower number. NYSED has the actual score point and percentage ranking data for all students. It can easily report where the 40% of students are point wise within Level 1 range. This information is of huge importance for gauging how much help incoming students will need to pass the new Common Core Regents exams; it should be made public for all stakeholders to see.

- **The needs of one important group, Regents test re-takers (75,000 students statewide annually for the Integrated Algebra exam), has not received any attention from NYSED.** Another concern that has not been addressed is how will 75,000 students, that historically failed the Integrated Algebra Regents exam, now do on the Common Core Algebra I exam (an exam that is based on a much more challenging curriculum to master). To be in the test re-taker group, a student had to fail the exam between 1 and 3 tries within a one year period. All parties agree that the Common Core Algebra 1 exam is a more difficult exam. The big unknown here is if the average score in the test re-taker group goes down and by how much. A tougher exam, a drop in scores, will lead to the next question: *how many more times will students in the test re-taker group keep trying to pass the exam or just give up in defeat and not graduate with a Regents Diploma.*

- **If it's a statewide problem, then it requires a statewide solution.** Every high school can review incoming 8th Grade ELA and Math test scores to determine what kind of resources will be needed to help students pass the Regents. Schools can also give their own in-house assessments to see individual student strengths and weaknesses. But the Common Core Regents transition is a statewide program and may require a statewide solution. NYSED has the test results data for both the June 2014 and June 2015 Common Core Algebra 1 Regents exam administration. Based on these test results, when will NYSED issue new guidance on the transition to the Common Core Regents Exams? Additional funding may also be needed. NYSED must disclose the number of students that failed the new Common Core Regents exams and by how much.

- **The problems can be resolved, see recommendations on page 10:** The good news is that useful and easy to implement recommendations are readily available for a smoother high school transition to the Common Core Standards.

Introduction

It is now over 16 months since the first administration of the new Common Core Regents Algebra 1 Exam in June of 2014. A second administration of the Common Core Algebra Exam took place in June of 2015 (along with larger numbers of students taking both the old Comprehensive English and new Common Core ELA Regents exam also in June 2015). Despite a very public display of documents explaining the new Common Core Regents test development process, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) has yet to issue any information on the change in passing rates between the old and new Regents exams. An analysis of first time test takers would be a good place to look.

What is going on?

In my [Discussion Paper](#), (June 2015) which was recently reported on in [Chalkbeat NY](#), [Hechinger Report](#) and [US News and World Report](#), I analyzed the only publicly available data from NYSED and found big red flags indicating that special education students and English Language Learner students may be facing lower pass rates on the new Regents Common Core Algebra exam than the Integrated Algebra exam. This is no small matter, since passing five of the Regents exams, which for most students includes the first year Algebra exam, is a requirement for high school graduation. NYSED has full access to the test score data for the June 2014 and June 2015 Regents exam administration. NYSED can separate out first time Regents test takers from test re-takers. Given the troubling signs in the available data, it is imperative that NYSED review all of the data it has and provide its own analysis regarding its goal of keeping passing rates comparable. *The transition to the Common Core Regents will be much smoother if all stakeholders have the information they need to meaningfully participate.*

October Discussion Paper update: the update looks at the relationship between the NYS ELA and Math test scores and the high school Regents exams. The purpose for exploring the connection is to see if a useful early warning system is already in place for incoming high school students. If the early warning system is sending off signals of alarm, what should be an effective response? The update also focuses on a new piece of predictive data (data that NYSED has in its possession). NYSED can show the range of scores within a Performance Level 1. The new information can alert all stakeholders to the statewide learning needs of incoming high school students and help decide if more funding will be needed to ensure a successful transition to the Common Core standards at the secondary school level.



1. NYSED should have known two years before the administration of the Common Core Algebra 1 Regents Exam only (June 2015) that the pass rate for students with disabilities and English language learners will not remain comparable (over the old Integrated Algebra Regents Exam). The same warning also applies to the June 2016 Common Core Regents Exam administration for both Algebra 1 and ELA.

“On a citywide basis, students’ entering proficiency—as measured by their performance on State 8th grade subject tests—is highly predictive of their likelihood of passing the high school Regents exams.” Source: NYC-DOE School Quality Guide Educator Guide High Schools 2013-14.

“The assessment results tell educators and families how individual students are doing and where they need extra support.” Source: NYSED Grades 3 to 8 Test Scores Press Release August 12, 2015.

The NYS Grades 3 to 8 Common Core ELA and Math Exam system offers ample data for determining the likelihood of students passing the new Common Core Algebra 1 and ELA Regents Exams: The first year of the NYSED Common Core Grades 3 to 8 ELA and Math Tests took place in 2012-13. As has been widely reported, the new Common Core Grades 3 to 8 ELA and Math exams saw a very sharp drop in student scores across the State and here in New York City. An important piece of information that has not received much if any attention from NYSED or the NYC-Department of Education (NYC-DOE) is the connection between the 8th grade scores and Common Core Regents Exam scores. The analysis below of the NYS Grades 3 to 8 ELA and Math Exams, with its 1 to 4 Performance Levels, shows that it was highly likely that there would be a significant drop in the Regents Exam pass rate for students with disabilities and English language learners (low income students also saw a significant drop in scores). A student scoring Level 1 means they are not on track to get a passing score on the Regents. A score of Level 2 (or higher) shows the student is on track to graduate.

Definitions of Performance Levels for the 2015 Grades 3-8 Mathematics Tests

NYS Level 1: Students performing at this level are well below proficient in standards for their grade. They demonstrate limited knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for Mathematics that are considered insufficient for the expectations at this grade.

NYS Level 2: Students performing at this level are partially proficient in standards for their grade. They demonstrate knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for Mathematics that are considered partial but insufficient for the expectations at this grade. Students performing at Level 2 are considered on track to meet current New York high school graduation requirements but are not yet proficient on Common Core Learning Standards at this grade.

NYS Level 3: Students performing at this level are proficient in standards for their grade. They demonstrate knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for Mathematics that are considered sufficient for the expectations at this grade.

NYS Level 4: Students performing at this level excel in standards for their grade. They demonstrate knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for Mathematics that are considered more than sufficient for the expectations at this grade.

Source: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/ela-math/>

The data clearly showing the inevitable result was publicly available a year before students took the test in June of 2014 and two years before students took the test in June of 2015. The same early warning system can now be used for the June 2016 Regents administration.

Below is a comparison of the NYS Math and ELA 8th graders test scores with the old Regents exams. If the scores are comparable, that means that students are passing the last year (before entering high school) of the new Common Core exam at the same rate that they were passing the Integrated Algebra and Comprehensive English exams.

Chart 1. NYS 8th Grade Math Levels 2 to 4 Scores and NYS Regents Integrated Algebra Exam Pass Rates

Common Core 8 th Grade Math Exam % of Students with Level 2 to Level 4 Scores					Integrated Algebra Regents Exam % Passing Scores				
Test Taker Groups	2013	2014	2015	3 year average	Test Taker Groups	2012	2013	2014	3 year average
All students	69%	63	60	64%	All students	71%	74%	72%	72%
Students with disabilities	29%	29	27	28%	Students with disabilities	41%	43%	41%	41.6%
English language learners	34%	32	32	32.6%	English language learners	-	50%	50	50

Source and notes: Level 1 are at risk of failing the Common Core Algebra I and ELA Regents Exam. All data was taken from: <http://data.nysed.gov/>. These figures do not include Non-Public high schools (Almost all Catholic and most yeshiva high schools also confer a NYS Regents Diploma). Students with disabilities and English Language Learners in these schools may also be affected by the transition to the Common Core Regents. Since the Integrated Algebra Regents Exam was no longer administered in 2015, 2014 is the last year for a comparison. It is important to mention that some 8th graders opted out of the NYS Common Core Math Test in 2014 and 2015.

- **All Students:** NYSED succeeded with its goal of keeping scores comparable in 2013 with only a 2% difference.
- **Students with disabilities:** For the 2015 Math Exam, the pass rate for 8th grade students with disabilities is 14% lower with the new Common Core Math test than the pass rate for the Integrated Algebra Regents Exam. This means as these 8th graders enter high school, there is very strong likelihood that the new pass rate will also drop by around 14% unless high schools undertake intensive interventions to help these students.
- **English Language Learners:** For the 2015 Math Exam, the pass rate for 8th grade students with disabilities is 18% lower with the new Common Core Math test than the pass rate for the Integrated Algebra Regents Exam. This means as these 8th graders enter high school, there is very strong likelihood that the new pass rate will also drop by around 18% unless high schools undertake intensive interventions to help these students.

Chart 2. Comparison of NYS 8th Grade ELA and NYS Regents Comprehensive English Pass Rates

Common Core 8 th Grade ELA Exam Scores % of students with Level 2 to Level 4					Comprehensive English Regents Exam Passing Rate				
Test taker groups	2013	2014	2015	3 year average	Test taker groups	2012	2013	2014	3 year average
All students	70%	72%	70%	70.6%	All students	82%	77%	82%	80%
Students with disabilities	29%	32%	32%	31%	Students with disabilities	53%	44%	52%	49.6%
English language learners	17%	18%	22%	19%	English language learners	-	32%	46%	39%

Source and notes: Level 1 students are at risk of failing the Common Core Algebra I and ELA Regents Exam. All data was taken from: <http://data.nysed.gov>. These figures do not include Non-Public high schools (Almost all Catholic and most yeshiva high schools also confer a NYS Regents Diploma). These two groups make up about 20% of the total high school student population for New York State. Students with disabilities and English Language Learners in these schools may also be affected by the transition.

- **All students:** for the three year average, the drop in the passing rate is close to comparable at 9%.
- **Students with disabilities:** for the three year average, the pass rate for students with disabilities is 18% lower with the new Common Core ELA test than the pass rate for the Comprehensive English Regents Exam. This means as these 8th graders enter high school, there is very strong likelihood that the number of students passing the Regents may also drop by as much as 18% unless high schools undertake intensive interventions to help these students.
- **English Language Learners:** for the three year average, the pass rate for English language learners was 20% lower with the new Common Core ELA test than the pass rate for the Comprehensive English Regents Exam. This means as these 8th graders enter high school, there is very strong likelihood that the number of students passing the Regents may also drop by as much as 20% unless high schools undertake intensive interventions to help these students.

Level 2: The analysis here only focused on Level 1 students. The largest number of 8th grade students score in Performance Level 2. Based on the NYSED Performance Level 2 description, the assumption here is that all Level 2 students will pass the Regents with a minimum of help. NYSED should also study the results of Level 2 students to make sure that the Performance Level corresponds to the actual reality of Regents Exam scores.

For students with disabilities and English language learners, the drop in the passing rate between the Common Core and the Old Regents was significant for both math and English. The data shows that the passing rate is a statewide problem. Do high schools have the capacity to meet these new challenges? While the rollout for the Common Core ELA exam won't be fully in place until the June, 2016 Regents Administration (with students no longer having the option of taking both the old and new exam), the 2015 8th NYS ELA grade test scores show that the failure rate for the Common Core Regents ELA exam may also increase significantly (over the old Comprehensive English Regents Exam) for students with a disability and English Language Learners. *High schools were already challenged with helping students with disabilities and English language learners pass the old Regents Exams. Unless NYSED makes changes in the transition to the Common Core Regents exams, their resources will be even more stretched.*

2. Concerning the passing rate for the new Common Core Regents exams, the potential for an early warning and response system has been available since 2013.

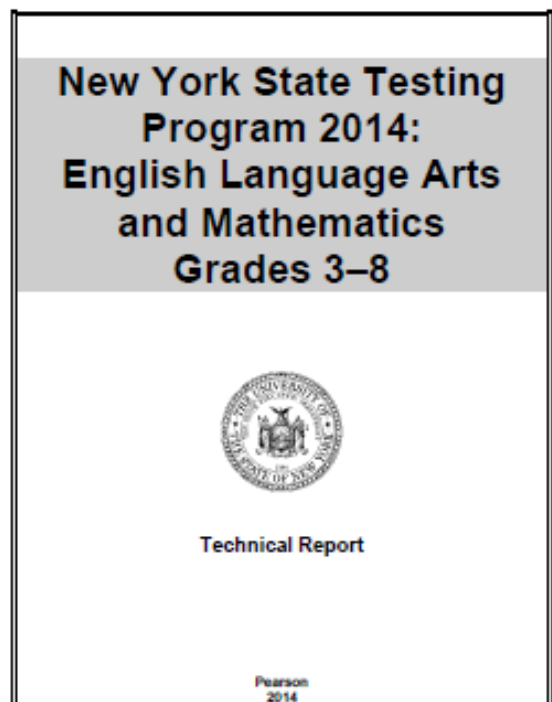
Throughout the Common Core Regents test development process, NYSED official policy was that the passing rates would remain comparable between the new and old Regents Exam. As schools strive towards the College and Career Ready aspirational goals of a 75 on the ELA and 80 on the Algebra 1 exam, NYSED does not want the transition to the Common Core to have an unintended consequence of a significant drop in the passing rate for Regents Exam (scoring below 65).

“The Department intends to maintain a zero to 100 point scale and distinct performance standards (or cut scores) that are comparable to the current 65 Regents Exam cut score for graduation purposes (Performance Level 3) and an aspirational college- and career-readiness cut score (Performance Level 4). As a result, we expect that the percentage of students passing (for graduation purposes) the new Common Core Regents Exams will likely be similar to the pass rates on existing Regents Exams at a score of 65.” Source: NYSED Setting Performance Standards: Common Core Regents Exams in Algebra I and ELA, June 2014

A risk of failing prediction system was already in place before any student sat down to take the new Common Core Algebra 1 Regents Exam. At least nine months before the June 2014 administration of the Regents exam, it was already highly likely, based on NYSED’s on the 2012-13 tests scores on the grades 3 to 8 NYS Math and ELA Assessment, that there would be a very significant drop in the pass rate for the new Common Core Algebra 1 Exam for students with disabilities and English language learners. NYSED Common Core performance level descriptions clearly stated that students below Level 2 are not on track for a passing Regents exam score and graduation.

A 290 page technical report on the NYS ELA and Math test program did not include a single sentence about the relationship between the test system and the High School Regents exam. A search of the www.engageny.org website did not find any materials discussing the relationship between NYS Grades 3 to 8 Common Core ELA and Math Test program and the NYS High School Common Core Regents exams.

Unless intensive interventions are offered the Level 1 students when they start high school, most of these students will not be able to pass the required Regents exams in Math (and possibly also in English). A google search did not lead to any NYSED guidance memos warning schools that there might be a drop in the pass rate and to ramp up efforts to help these two groups pass the new Common Core Regents exams. The only NYSED official guidance memos regarding Common Core transition and Special Education students was broad covering all grades (with nothing specific to the Regents).



The EngageNY website has many excellent materials for schools to use to ensure students are prepared for the Common Core Regents exams. However, materials specifically targeted to these two groups at risk of failing the Common Core Regents Algebra 1 and ELA Exam could not be located. There are Common Core and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) materials for helping students with disabilities in elementary and middle school grades. Scaffolding Instruction for English Language Learners: A Resource Guide for Mathematics Diane August *American Institutes for Research* Diane Staehr Fenner Anita Bright *DSF Consulting*

3. The passing rate of one important group, Regents test re-takers (75,000 students statewide annually for the Integrated Algebra exam), has not received much if any attention from NYSED. NYSED can provide more data showing how prepared these students are as they enter high school. The data will allow all stakeholders to see if there is a statewide problem that needs to be addressed.

“Level 1 PLDs describe students who did not demonstrate sufficient evidence to be classified into Level 2; Level 1 contains the widest range of performance on the test: from the lowest-scoring students, including those students who attempted but got no answers correct, to those students who are on the cusp but just below Level 2.” Source: 2014 New York State Testing Program Common Core Mathematics Performance Level Descriptions Grade 8

With the transition to Common Core, now there are two groups of students at risk of not graduating with a Regents Diploma:

- 1) **Test re-takers:** The first group are students that historically failed the old Integrated Algebra Exam. The NYSED annual figure for this group includes students that took the test between 1 and 3 times (the Regents is offered three times a year). The highest of the three scores is recorded.
- 2) **First time test takers:** The second group are the new and higher numbers of students failing the Common Core Algebra Exam for the first time.

The needs of one important group, Regents test re-takers (75,000 students statewide annually for the Integrated Algebra exam), has not received much if any attention from NYSED. Assuming that a comparable passing rate is occurring for all groups of students (including students with a disability and English language learners), a question that has not been explored is how will a historically struggling group of students do with what all parties agree is a much more difficult exam. Will the test re-taker group now have a harder time passing the Regents Exam? Will this mean that the Regents test re-taker group gets larger or that more students just give up in frustration?

There is available data from the 8th Grade Math Performance Level test scores that can offer answers. The Performance levels are based on a range of scores. In 2015, the lowest possible score is 137 and the highest possible score is 400. Each level covers a range of score numbers.

2015 Grades 3-8 Mathematics Tests NYS

Scale Score Ranges Associated with Each Performance Level

Grade	NYS Level 1	NYS Level 2	NYS Level 3	NYS Level 4
3	137-284	285-313	314-339	340-397
4	137-282	283-313	314-340	341-405
5	127-293	294-318	319-345	346-415
6	125-283	284-317	318-339	340-411
7	124-292	293-321	322-347	348-398
8	124-286	287-321	322-348	349-400

What is critical with the scale score ranges is where students score within a range. For example, the 8th Grade Level 1 scale scores are 124 to 286. So a student could score a “high”, “middle” or “low” Level 1 score. If most students in Level 1 score close to 286, then the likelihood of this group passing the Regents for the second or third try is good. If most students score closer to 124, unless there are intensive interventions offered in high school, it is doubtful these students will ever pass the Regents test. This more granular analysis is required since there is much room within a Level. The results can have a huge effect on a high school’s capacity to help incoming students with passing the Common Core Algebra 1 and ELA Regents Exams.

NYSED has more detailed data available for analysis. The agency has the actual percentile rankings for all students. For example, here in New York City, last year, 40% of all 8th grade students scored a Level 1 on the NYS Grades 3 to 8 Common Core Math Test (and 28% of all NYC-DOE 8th graders scored a Level 1 on the Common Core ELA exam). Within the point range of Level 1, it is important to know where students actually scored. NYSED already has this data broken down. The language below can be found on the official NYSED individual student test score report every parent receives for their child.

Overall State Percentile Rank* X

**Your child’s score on the test was the same or higher than X percent of all students statewide who took this test.*

In short, there are now two groups of students that will fail the Common Core ELA and Algebra I Regents test. Each group should must be given separate consideration of their challenges to pass the exam. If the group that historically failed the old Regents now finds itself with a test that is more difficult, then this group will most likely now make attempts to pass the test and possibly giving up. The only way stakeholders will know if there is a statewide problem is if NYSED undertakes a deeper analysis of first time test takers to compare not just passing rates but of equal importance how badly are students now failing the Regents tests. NYSED has all of the data needed here to answer these two critical passing rate markers.

4. Why won’t NYSED include the significant increase in the number of Students with Disabilities and English language learners failing the new Common Core Algebra 1 Regents in its new workgroup review of the Common Core Algebra 1 Regents Exam:

This past September, NYSED formed a working committee to address concerns with the Common Core Algebra I Regents Exam. In a September 9, 2015 memo from Deputy Commissioner Elizabeth Berlin to the P-12 Regents

Member committee, a recommendation was made to create a work group to study the issues with the Common Core Algebra 1 exam. At the September monthly meeting, the Regents approved the formation of a workgroup of educators to study the problematic issues in the rollout of the Common Core Algebra I Regents Exam. Missing from the NYSED September 9, 2015 Memo or the subsequent action plan is any mention of the significant decrease in the passing rate for thousands of students with disabilities and English Language Learners.

Here is the official NYSED communication:

"MATTERS NOT REQUIRING BOARD ACTION

Workgroup on Common Core Regents Exams [P-12 (D) 1] – the Committee discussed questions raised about three aspects of the Common Core Regents Exam in Algebra I:

- (1) the low percentage of students who achieved at Level 4 and Level 5;
- (2) the conversion chart, in which students need many fewer raw score points for the Level 2 and Level 3; and many more raw score points for Levels 4 and 5; and
- (3) concerns that college personnel will be confused by the changes in the test when they review information on student transcripts. The lower percentage of students scoring at Level 4 and above, as compared to past student performance on the Regents Exam in Integrated Algebra, is a direct result of implementing higher learning standards.

Department staff were directed by the Board of Regents to convene a group of educators to consider and advise on the technical and policy questions raised, including whether a new scale should be adopted to address the concerns about the conversion chart and transcript review by college personnel."

Prior to making recommendations forming the Common Core Algebra 1 exam workgroup, NYSED and the Common Core Regents workgroup had ample information showing that the Common Core Algebra 1 Regents pass rate was not comparable with the Integrated Algebra Regents Exam. An August 2015 Report, [*Rough Calculations Will the Common Core Algebra Regents Exams Threaten NYC's Graduation Rates?*](#) by Kim Nauer, Nicole Mader and Laura Zigmond from the Center for New York City Affairs at the New School offers data, interviews and analysis for the New York City Department of Education high schools. The Report is one big red flag of concern for a drop in the Algebra Regents passing rates and possible lower graduation rates at many New York City high schools. In particular, the Report shows that the passing rate for first time test takers for two at risk groups, students with disabilities and English language learners, dropped by respectively by 17% and 23%.

A copy of the author's June 2015 Discussion Paper and a September policy update, were sent to all Regents members, then Deputy Commissioner Ken Wagner and Deputy Commissioner Elizabeth Berlin. With all of this information, based on analyzing publicly available information, it is surprising that NYSED has issued no new guidance addressing the documented red flags in the Common Core Regents exam transition.

5. Will NYSED make changes to ensure a smoother transition for the Common Core Regents Exam? *The good news is that useful and easy to implement recommendations are readily available.*

In adopting the new Regents exams in 2014, NYSED declared that passing rates would remain “comparable” between the old and new exams. Right now, NYSED has a deadline of June 2016 for a Common Core only Regents administration (students will no longer be able to take the old Integrated Algebra and Comprehensive English Regents). And that raises a big question: will all students be ready for the new Common Core only Regents exams? Three very critical statewide policy recommendations cannot be addressed until NYSED provides its own analysis using all of the data at its disposal:

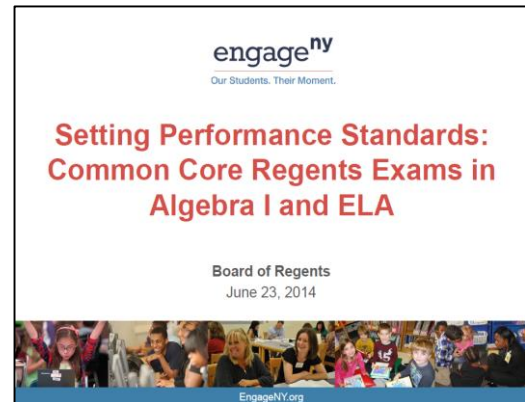
- ***Will NYSED and NYC-DOE increase the use of best practices to help special education students and English Language Learner students succeed with the Common Core based Regents exam.***²
- ***In June of 2016, students will only be able to take the new Common Core Regents Exam for Algebra I and English Language Arts. Will NYSED postpone the June 2016 Common Core Algebra I and Common Core ELA only Regents exam administration?***
- ***If NYSED keeps the June 2016 Common Core transition deadline, should special education and English Language learner students be allowed to have the option of taking both the Integrated Algebra Regents exam and the new Common Core Algebra exam?***

These are decisions that all stakeholders including Regents members, school district officials, high school principals, teachers and parents should be able to weigh in on. ***The good news is that implementing any of the three recommendations discussed here will only strengthen the transition to the Common Core Regents.*** What is NYSED waiting for? The start of the school year would be a great time to make an announcement. Thousands of students will be able to start with considerably less stress if NYSED adopted the any of these three recommendations.

2. In a recent report, “ROUGH CALCULATIONS: Will the Common Core Algebra Regents Exam Threaten NYC’s Graduation Rates?” by Kim Nauer, Nicole Mader and Laura Zingmond August 2015. Center for New York City Affairs at the New School, there is a discussion of how several NYC high schools offer extra help so that struggling students succeed with the Algebra 1 Regents exam. These schools have very high passing rates.

6. Serious concerns showing a flawed methodology for setting the Common Core Regents test scores deserve a response by NYSED

In my first Common Core Regents [Discussion Paper](#), there is a section about a possible serious flaw in the methodology used by NYSED to set the test scores for the Algebra and ELA Regents Exam. The relevance here is that an undercount (around 32,000 students) in the construction of test score setting methodology could further decrease the passing rates for the Common Core Regents Algebra 1 test re-taker group (the same methodology was also used for the ELA Regents Exam). Here is a summary of my concern regarding the methodology used by NYSED to set the test scores last year (a full description is in the Discussion Paper).



“One big concern for the phase in of the Common Core Regents Exams is that three groups, students with a disability, English language learners and Economically Disadvantaged, were undercounted in the methodology used by NYSED to set the test scores on the Common Core Algebra 1 exam (see #5). In the methodology used by NYSED for setting the passing score for the Common Core Algebra 1 exam, only students from a typical June administration were used. If annual test takers (August, January and June) had been the basis for the methodology, then the composition of the various student population groups would have been very different. Instead, Students with a Disability were undercounted by 28% of their actual total, English language learners were undercounted by 39% of their actual total, and Economically Disadvantaged students were undercounted by 15.6% of their actual total. Also, the annual number of test takers is much higher than just the June administration. Thousands of test re-takers were not included in the NYSED methodology (an average of 32,356 from the past three years). If these students had been included in the test score setting methodology, would the difficulty of passing the test remain the same? NYSED should provide an explanation regarding why using the June administration was better for the score setting methodology than using the total number of annual test takers.”

7. June 2015 administration Common Core Regents Exam results offer strong validation for the usefulness of the NYS Math and ELA exam as a predictor of high school performance.

The just released 2014-2015 administration Common Core test results offer strong validation for the usefulness of the NYS Math and ELA exam as a predictor of high school performance. 206,276 high school students (mostly

9th graders) took the Common Core Algebra 1 exam. These test results cover three Regents administrations: August 2014, January 2015 and June 2015). For the June administration, 9th grade students could only take the Common Core Algebra 1 exam (in 2014, they had option of taking both the older Integrated Algebra and new Common Core Algebra 1 Exam).

Comparison of 8th Grade NYS Math Scores with 2014-2015 Common Core Algebra 1 Regents Scores

Common Core 8 th Grade Math Exam % of Students with Level 2 to Level 4 Scores						Common Core Algebra 1 Regents Exam	
Test Taker Groups	2013	2014	2015	3 year average		Test Taker Groups	2014-2015
All students	69%	63%	60%	64%		All students	63%
Students with disabilities	29%	29%	27%	28%		Students with disabilities	26%
English language learners	34%	32%	32%	32.6%		English language learners	28%

Source: NYSED Report Card

Analysis: The two sets of scores are comparable for each population group. What this means is that most at risk students are failing first the Math exam in 8th grade and then failing the Common Core Algebra Exam in high school. To break this pattern, more resources (and possibly funding) must be devoted to helping struggling learners.

The 2015 Common Core Algebra Regents provide strong validation of the importance of the NYS Grades 3 to 8 Math Exam as a predictor of performance on the Regents exam.

ELA exam update: Since students still had the option of taking both old Comprehensive English and new Common Core ELA Regents exam, less than half of all 11th graders took the new Common Core exam. We will have to wait until the June 2016 administration to compare the results of the two test systems.