

To the Governor and the Legislature of the State of New York:

Chapter 655 of the Laws of 1987 (which amended Section 215-a of State Education Law) requires the Board of Regents and the State Education Department to submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature with respect to “enrollment trends; indicators of student achievement in reading, writing, mathematics, science and vocational courses; graduation, college attendance and employment rates; ... [and] information concerning teacher and administrator preparation, turnover, in-service education and performance.” The law further states that: “To the extent practicable, all such information shall be displayed on both a statewide and individual district basis and by racial/ethnic group and gender.”

The annual report is presented in two parts. The first is an analysis of statewide data contained in this publication, *New York, the State of Learning: Statewide Profile of the Educational System*. The second part is the individual district profiles contained in *New York, the State of Learning: Statistical Profiles of Public School Districts*. Data in both publications were derived, primarily, from information submitted by superintendents of schools to the Department’s Information and Reporting Services office and the Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities office. The data highlighted in the publication were selected in accordance with the specific mandates of Section 215-a of Education Law. There are, of course, other data regarding student performance, instructional programs, support services, and resources which must be considered in order to develop fully comprehensive profiles of school districts.

The information contained in this report should be helpful to the Governor, the Legislature, and the citizens of New York State in assessing the effectiveness of the many educational programs supported by the State, and in working with the Board of Regents and school officials to improve learning outcomes for our children and youth.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard P. Mills". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "M".

RICHARD P. MILLS
President of The University
of the State of New York
and Commissioner of Education

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NEW YORK

THE STATE OF LEARNING

**A Report to the Governor and
the Legislature
on the
Educational Status of the
State's Schools**

**STATEWIDE PROFILE OF THE
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

The University of the State of New York/The State Education Department
Albany, New York 12234
July 2004

PREFACE

Beginning in 1996, the Board of Regents raised standards at all grade levels throughout the curriculum and redefined the requirements for high school graduation to align with the new standards. In June 2003, the first class of high school students subject to the higher English, mathematics, social studies, and science requirements graduated. The effect of higher standards is already apparent in improved performance on many State assessments.

In 2002–03, more students scored 55 or higher on Regents examinations in four of the five areas required for graduation than took these examinations in 1996–97. These areas are English, global studies (or global history and geography), U.S. history and government, and biology (or living environment).

Of general-education students in the 1999 cohort (students who entered grade 9 in Fall 1999), 87 percent had met the graduation requirement in English, 84 percent in mathematics, 89 percent in global history and geography, 86 percent in U.S. history and government, and 87 percent in science by the end of their fourth year in high school.

On all five Regents examinations used to meet graduation requirements — English, mathematics (mathematics A and sequential mathematics, course III), global studies or global history and geography, U.S. history and government, and biology or living environment — the number of students with disabilities who scored 55 or higher increased between 2001–02 and 2002–03.

Since the implementation of higher graduation requirements in 1996, the percentage of public school graduates earning Regents diplomas increased from 42 to 56 percent.

About 82 percent of 2003 public high school graduates planned to pursue postsecondary education, compared with 66 percent in 1980.

The number of public school students participating in Advanced Placement examinations has nearly doubled since 1992. There were almost twice as many Black, Asian, and Hispanic candidates in 2003 as in 1992.

The mean SAT composite score for the class of 2003 was 18 points higher than the mean for the class of 1993.

In 2003, 64 percent of fourth-graders in public schools met the standards in English language arts, an increase of 15 percentage points over 1999. Seventy-nine percent of fourth-graders met the standards in mathematics in 2003, compared with 67 percent in 1999.

On the middle-level assessment in English language arts, 46 percent of eighth-graders in public schools met the standards in 2003, compared with 49 percent in 1999. In 2003, 52 percent of eighth-graders met the standards in mathematics, an increase of 14 percentage points compared with 1999.

The percentage of students with disabilities educated primarily in general-education classes has increased to 52.1 percent.

These signs of progress are encouraging, but too many students and schools have not yet shared in these successes. These, by and large, are schools faced with the challenge of educating large numbers of children placed at risk by poverty, the inability to speak English well, and recent immigration. Throughout this report, in fact, we document a dismaying alignment of disadvantaged students (disproportionately racial/ethnic minorities), schools with the poorest educational resources (fiscal and human), and substandard achievement. Conversely, we find that those schools that serve the fewest at-risk children have the greatest financial resources, teachers with the best credentials, and the highest levels of achievement.

Perhaps the sharpest contrasts exist between public schools in Large City Districts and those in districts (mostly suburban) with low percentages of students in poverty and high levels of income and property wealth (Low-Need Districts). On the 2003 elementary-level State assessment in English language arts, only 45 percent of students in Large City Districts, compared with 85 percent in Low-Need Districts, met the standards by scoring at Level 3 or above. The differences in student performance in middle-level mathematics are even more striking. Only 24 percent of students in Large City Districts, compared with 80 percent in Low-Need Districts, met the standards. Sixty-one percent of general-education students in Large City Districts, compared with 95 percent in Low-Need Districts, who entered grade 9 in 1999 scored at 65 or above in Regents English after four years. Twenty-nine percent of high school completers in Large City Districts, compared with 75 percent in Low-Need Districts, earned Regents-endorsed diplomas in 2002–03. These contrasts in performance parallel contrasts in student need and district resources. Seventy percent of students in Large City Districts, compared with three percent in Low-Need Districts, were eligible for free lunches in Fall 2002. Nearly one-third of middle-level mathematics teachers in Large City Districts, compared with five percent in Low-Need Districts, were not certified in mathematics. Despite Large City Districts large number of students placed at-risk by poverty and limited proficiency in English, the mean expenditure per pupil was 89 percent of that in Low-Need Districts. Consequently, Large City Districts must compete for teachers with more advantaged districts whose median teacher salary exceeds Large Cities by 26 percent.

Consider also these contrasts between low- and high-minority schools and among racial/ethnic groups. Schools with the highest percentages of minority children — who are frequently also poor — have the least experienced teachers, the most teachers teaching out of certification, and the highest rates of teacher turnover. On an average day, 95.2 percent of students in low-minority schools, but only 88.8 percent in high-minority schools, are at school. Only about 48 percent of Black and about 48 percent of Hispanic fourth-graders, compared with 75 percent of White fourth-graders, met the standards on the English language arts assessment for elementary-level students by scoring at Level 3 or above. Of general-education students in the 1999 cohort, 88.1 percent of White cohort members met the Regents English examination graduation requirement by scoring 65 or above after four years; only 57.9 percent of Black and 56.2 percent of Hispanic cohort members did so. In the 2002–03 school year, 66 percent of White students, compared with 23 percent of Black and 26 percent of Hispanic students, earned a Regents-endorsed local diploma. These results are even more disturbing when you consider that in the past five years, the enrollment in high-minority schools has increased, while the enrollment in low-minority schools has decreased.

Nor is underachievement limited to large, urban high-minority schools. Consider these contrasts between those districts discussed above with low percentages of students in poverty and high levels of income and property wealth and those rural districts with high percentages of stu-

dents in poverty and low property wealth. The more advantaged districts spend over \$2,400 more per student and pay their teachers \$20,000 more annually. Students in more advantaged districts are substantially more likely than students in less advantaged districts to perform with distinction on Regents examinations, and they are more than twice as likely to plan to attend four-year colleges.

State aid formulas help to ensure that those districts with the least ability to raise resources locally, on average, receive the largest allocations of aid from the State. However, with few exceptions, the formulas do not consider the extra help in achieving the standards needed by children placed at risk by poverty and limited proficiency in English.

What are we doing to correct these problems? The State is raising academic standards, increasing the capacity of schools to achieve excellence, and measuring results to make schools accountable.

To raise academic standards, we have established, through a public process, higher standards throughout the curriculum and aligned State assessments with those standards. We have raised the minimum competency requirements for high school graduation to ensure that all graduates are prepared to succeed in postsecondary education or gain skilled employment. We are implementing the strategies for ensuring that all students meet the new, higher standards recommended by the Regents Task Force on Closing the Performance Gap. We are making efforts to ensure that all students spend their required school time focusing productively on academic learning.

To increase the capacity of schools to achieve excellence, we have advanced State aid proposals to ensure that all students receive the help they need to meet the standards, ensure adequate and cost-effective funding for special education, increase aid for career and technical education programs, and consolidate existing state aid formulas into a flexible Consolidated Operating Aid formula. Further, these proposals direct an increasing percentage of aid to support schools that serve high-need student populations.

We are increasing the capacity of schools to serve the needs of students with disabilities. The focus continues on reducing unnecessary referrals by enhancing early childhood programs and providing general classroom environments that support the special learning needs of students.

To prepare teachers for the new standards and assessments, we have enhanced staff development statewide and are implementing steps recommended by a Task Force on Teaching to assure that all teachers are prepared to assist all students in meeting the new academic standards. We will require that all new teachers pass rigorous tests in the content areas they plan to teach. Based on the recommendations of a task force that reviewed the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), we are taking steps to improve the effectiveness of BOCES in preparing students for the challenges of the twenty-first century. Under regulations, teachers and parents are participating in school decisionmaking on such matters as scheduling, staffing, goal-setting, and allocating resources. We are linking educational institutions — schools, colleges, libraries, and museums — through telecommunication networks, so that working with the resources of these institutions will become a daily part of the curriculum for all students.

High student performance and capable leadership are inextricably linked. The Regents have approved the report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on School Leadership. The approved plan, based on conferences across the State, has three goals: to guarantee the quality of leadership

education, to recruit and expand the diversity of the education leaders that New York State needs, and to improve the environment for leadership. New regulations on the preparation and certification of school leaders were approved by the Board of Regents in July 2003.

We have taken steps to force failing schools to reform, reorganize, or close and have amended the regulations that govern registration review to improve our capacity to identify and remedy low performance in schools. In July 2003, the Board of Regents adopted amendments to Commissioner's Regulations that revised the State's system of accountability for student success to comply with the federal No Child Left Behind Act. These regulations represent a significant milestone in the evolution of the school accountability program in New York. The accountability program supports the efforts of the Regents to both improve student results and close the gap in student performance. We have implemented a system of school and BOCES reports designed to inform the public about student performance, student demographics, and other conditions of the school.

The Board of Regents, the Commissioner of Education, and the State Education Department look forward to working collaboratively with the Governor, the Legislature, boards of education, school personnel, parents, and other interested citizens and students themselves to make the promise of meeting higher standards a reality for all students.



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BOARD OF REGENTS – REPORT TO GOVERNOR, PRESIDENT PRO TEM OF SENATE AND SPEAKER OF ASSEMBLY – EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF STATE’S SCHOOLS

Memoranda relating to this chapter, see Legislative and Executive Memoranda, post

CHAPTER 655

Approved and effective Aug. 5, 1987

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to providing for the annual submission by the regents of the university of the state of New York to the governor and the legislature of a report on the educational status of the schools

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

§ 1. Legislative findings. The legislature hereby finds that the state annually devotes extensive resources to education and that it is important to insure that such resources are spent effectively and efficiently. Accordingly, the legislature determines that the board of regents should submit to the governor, the president pro tem of the senate and the speaker of the assembly an annual report setting forth the educational status of the state’s schools. This report will assist the governor and legislature in assessing the efficacy of the many educational programs supported by the state.

§ 2. The education law is amended by adding a new section two hundred fifteen-a to read as follows:

§ 215-a. Annual report by regents to governor and legislature

The regents of the university of the state of New York shall prepare and submit to the governor, the temporary president [pro tem] of the senate, and the speaker of the assembly, not later than the first day of January, nineteen hundred eighty-nine, nineteen hundred and ninety and nineteen hundred ninety-one and the fifteenth day of February of each year thereafter, a report concerning the schools of the state which shall set forth with respect to the preceding school year: enrollment trends; indicators of student achievement in reading, writing, mathematics, science and vocational courses; graduation, college attendance and employment rates; such other indicators of student performance as the regents shall determine; information concerning teacher and administrator preparation, turnover, in-service education and performance; expenditure per pupil on regular education and expenditure per pupil on special education and such other information as requested by the governor, the temporary president [pro tem] of the senate, or the speaker of the assembly. To the extent practicable, all such information shall be displayed on both a state-wide and individual district basis and by racial/ethnic group and gender. The regents are authorized to require school districts, boards of cooperative educational services and nonpublic schools to provide such information as is necessary to prepare the report. In preparing the report, the regents shall consult with other interested parties, including local school districts, teachers’ and faculty organizations, school administrators, parents and students.

§ 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

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on the Educational Status of the State's Schools

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