

How to get
more information...

Regional Associates of the Office
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(VESID) may be reached at:

Western Regional Office: (585) 344-2002 ext.420

Hudson Valley Regional Office: (914) 245-0010

Central Regional Office: (315) 428-3287

Eastern Regional Office: (518) 486-6366

Long Island Regional Office: (631) 884-8530

New York City Regional Office: (718) 722-4544

For more information, see the
New York State Education
Department Web Sites:

Education Department Web Site:

<http://www.nysed.gov/home.html>

VESID special education web site:

<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/home.html>

Learning Standards:

<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/learnstand/home.html>

**If you would like to receive email
notification of our publications,
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<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/home.html>

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Are you

the parent of a child with a disability?

**New York
State
has raised
expectations**

Find out how these changes will affect
your child...



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The University of the State of New York



The State Education Department
Office of Vocational
and Educational Services
for Individuals with Disabilities
Albany, NY 12234

<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/>



Parents as Real Partners

In June 1997, Congress amended the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to focus on helping students with disabilities succeed in general education classes. Some of the major changes in IDEA are aimed at:

- helping students with disabilities reach higher levels of achievement.
- ensuring that students with disabilities participate in statewide assessments.
- making special education a service, not a place.
- placing more students with disabilities in general education classes.
- emphasizing parents as partners with the school by changing how decisions are made about special education services.

Access to General
Education Curriculum

Many students with disabilities can get a high school diploma, based on the learning standards, if they have access to a strong curriculum and receive adequate support.

- The Committee on Special Education (CSE) must review a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) each year to make sure that students who are earning a Regents or local diploma participate in the necessary programs and receive the instructional modifications they need to progress in the general education curriculum and earn a Regents or local diploma.
- Students with disabilities must have access to courses, course content, electives and tests that are required for a high school diploma regardless of where they attend school or the type of school they attend (public or approved private school, Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) program or State-operated or State-supported school).
- Schools must provide each student with a disability equal access to the full range of programs and services available to all other students in order to achieve the learning results and appropriate diploma.

Higher Learning Standards for all Students

The Board of Regents has set higher learning standards for all students. These standards say that, in order to receive a high school diploma, a student must demonstrate the ability to do high school level work. Earlier standards, measured by Regents Competency Tests, were based on minimum high school graduation requirements at an 8th grade level. That was too low. Some feel these new standards may be out of reach for special education students.

Nonetheless, the success rate of students with disabilities is much better than many people would predict.

Regents policy insists that all students, with a few exceptions, must take the Regents Exams. There is, however, a safety net for special education students.

- New State tests reflect the higher standards. In 1999, 4th and 8th grade students took new tests in math, reading and writing. In 2000, a new science test was given to 4th grade students and a new social studies test was given to 5th grade students. In 2001, new science, social studies and technology examinations were given to 8th grade students.
- To earn a high school Regents diploma, students will need to take and pass the required course work and five Regents examinations.
- New graduation requirements began with the class that entered 9th grade in 2001.
- Not all students with disabilities will pursue the requirements for a Regents or local diploma. Some students will be awarded an Individualized Education Program (IEP) diploma based on achieving the educational goals specified in their IEP. These educational goals are set by the Committee on Special Education (CSE), with parental input, and must be linked to the learning standards and to appropriate performance indicators for the student.
- In order to ensure that students with severe disabilities are given the opportunity to achieve high standards, an alternate assessment was developed for students with disabilities who cannot participate in State or local assessments.

Safety Net for Students with Disabilities

In October 2003, the Board of Regents approved an extension of the Regents Competency Test (RCT) "safety net" for students with disabilities who pursue a Regents or local high school diploma.

The following students qualify for the RCT safety net:

- Students with disabilities identified through a CSE. Specific language regarding the availability of the safety net does not have to be indicated on the student's IEP.
- Students with disabilities identified through the Section 504 Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) if recommended and documented by the MDT on the student's Accommodation Plan.
- Students with disabilities declassified while in grades 8-12 if recommended and documented by the CSE on the student's IEP.

Students with disabilities entering 9th grade from the 1996-97 school year through the 2009-10 school year must take each Regents course and examination required for their entering class.

The safety net allows students with disabilities who fail a required Regents exam to meet the requirements for a local diploma by passing the RCT in that subject or the Department approved alternative. The school may administer the RCT before or after the Regents examination, but in all cases, the student must take the required Regents examination in order to earn the local diploma.

Positive Results

As more students with disabilities take the courses to prepare them for the higher standards, they will be prepared to take the new State assessments. We are seeing positive changes. Here are some results:

2000-2001 Results:

- 38.9% of students with disabilities scored at or above Level 3 on the Grade 4 mathematics examination.
- 25.6% of students with disabilities scored at or above Level 3 (the level at which students are considered to be making adequate progress towards meeting the higher Regents standards) on the Grade 4 English Language Arts examination.
- More students with disabilities passed the English Regents examination in 2001 than took it in 1997.
- More students with disabilities achieved a score of 55-100 on the Mathematics - Course 1 Regents examination than took it in 1997.
- 9.4% of students with disabilities who completed High School earned a Regents diploma, compared to 4.4% in 1995-96.

2001-2002 Results:

- 29.7% of students with disabilities who took the 4th grade English Language Arts examination scored at or above level 3.
- 61% of students with disabilities achieved a score of 55 or higher on the English Regents examination.
- 37.2% of students with disabilities scored at or above Level 3 on the 4th Grade Mathematics examination.
- The dropout rate of students with disabilities decreased from 8.4 % to 7.3%
- 11.1% of students with disabilities who completed High School earned Regents diplomas, an increase of 1.7% over the previous year.