

# *Are you*

**the parent of a child with a disability?**

**New York State  
is raising expectations  
for all students  
and has developed  
new state tests  
and graduation  
requirements**

**Find out how these changes will affect**

*Your child...*



The University of the State of New York  
The State Education Department  
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## *Parents as Real Partners*

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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.**
- **strengthening parents as partners with the school by changing how decisions are made about special education services.**

## *Access to General Education Curriculum*

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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, an extensive safety net for special education students.

- New State tests reflect the higher standards. This year 4th and 8th grade students took new tests in math, reading and writing. In 2000, a new science test will be given to 4th grade students and a new social studies test will be given to 5th grade students. In 2001, new science, social studies and technology examinations will be given to 8th grade students.
- The local diploma and the lower Regents Competency Tests (RCTs) will be phased out by 2004.
- To earn a high school Regents diploma, students will need to take and pass the required course work and five Regents examinations. These are being phased-in slowly.
- New graduation requirements will be in place for the class entering the 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, 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, new alternate performance indicators have been developed based on the State's learning standards for all students. An alternate assessment will be developed by July 2000 for students with disabilities who cannot participate in State or local assessments.

## *Safety Net For Students with Disabilities*

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In November 1997, the Board of Regents approved a "safety net" for students with disabilities who pursue a Regents or local high school diploma.

- The safety net is available to students with disabilities identified through a Committee on Special Education (CSE) or Section 504 Multidisciplinary Team (MDT).
- During the phase-in period, students with disabilities entering 9th grade between September 1996 and September 2000 will 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 Regents Competency Test (RCT) in that subject.

We will analyze student achievement during the phase-in period and make future decisions for students with disabilities based on this analysis.

# 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 already seeing positive changes. Here are some results:

## 1997 - 1998 Results:

- 94.7% of students with disabilities participated in the five elementary State tests. This is the highest participation rate ever.
- 74.5% of students with disabilities who took the English Regents examination scored 55 or higher and 51.4% scored 65 or higher.
- Many more students with disabilities participated in high school English and Mathematics Regents examinations, as compared to the previous year.
- 65.4% of students with disabilities earned a high school diploma.

Fewer students with disabilities dropped out of high school than the previous year.

## 1998 -1999 Results:

grade English Language Arts examination scored at or above level 3 (the level at which students are considered to be making adequate progress towards meeting the higher Regents standards). An additional 46% more students with disabilities scored at Level 2. With additional instruction, we anticipate that many of these students will also be successful in meeting the higher standards.

- 46% of students with disabilities who first entered ninth grade in 1996, achieved a score of 55 or higher on the English Regents examination. These students have successfully completed one of the new requirements for graduating with a high school diploma.

## *How to get more information...*

Regional Associates of the Office  
of Vocational and Educational Services  
for Individuals with Disabilities  
(VESID) may be reached at:

**Western Regional Office:** (716) 344-2112 ext. 420

**Hudson Valley Regional Office:** (914) 245-0010

**Eastern Regional Office:** (518) 486-6366

**Long Island Regional Office:** (516) 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:**  
[www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)

**VESID special education web site:**  
<http://web.nysed.gov/vesid/special.html>

**Learning Standards:**  
<http://web.nysed.gov/vesid/pubpage.html>

**If you would like to receive email  
notification of our publications,  
register at:**

<http://web.nysed.gov/vesid/register.htm>

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