

New York State United Teachers'

GUIDE



To THE NEW STANDARDS

2003-2004 School Year

Dear NYSUT Member:

New York's move to higher standards of teaching and learning continues to be a work in progress. Among other things, the state Board of Regents in 2003:

- extended the safety net of the 55-passing grade on Regents Exams;
- heard from you and your statewide union about concerns relating to the effort to re-think middle-level education; and
- acknowledged problems with two statewide exams and again turned to New York State United Teachers and our members for help in resolving them.

A key date in 2004 will be Feb. 2, when state certification undergoes sweeping changes for teachers and paraprofessionals. Those who seek teaching certification face new requirements in mentoring and professional development even as they face a compressed timeframe in which to obtain a master's degree. As the stakes increase, NYSUT continues to lobby for the support and resources that teachers, School-Related Professionals and higher education faculty need if students are to continue progress toward higher academic achievement.

When it comes to the new standards and assessments that are being phased in from kindergarten through 12th grade, it can be a challenge to keep up with all the changes. I hope you will use this annual special section of *New York Teacher* as a guide to what happened in 2003 and what's on the horizon as we work together to help students learn.

Joni Cortese

Antonia Cortese
NYSUT First Vice President

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This special section offers an overview of where New York state stands in the move to higher standards and more rigorous tests.

YOUR CREDENTIALS



Here's what in-service teachers need to know

If you're a New York state certified teacher reading this, chances are you won't be profoundly affected by the sweeping changes in certification that take effect Feb. 2. The major impact will be felt by those who are not yet in the certification pipeline as of that watershed date.

Generally, the new rules for state certification and the new certificate titles don't affect teachers holding certificates issued before Feb. 2 *unless you apply on or after that date for new certification.*

Nevertheless, no one will be left untouched by the changes wrought by a Regents Task Force on Teaching, which called in 1998 for higher standards of teacher preparation, certification and professional development to support the state's move to higher academic standards. For instance, even if you're holding a provisional or permanent certificate as of Feb. 2, you are

required to take part in "substantial" professional development, which your district must provide.

Below are some of the questions frequently asked by veteran teachers about the first major changes in certification in more than a decade:

Q: What does "substantial" professional development mean?

A: That's up to your district to determine through its Professional Development Plan. That plan must be put together by a committee whose majority is teacher-members appointed by their local union.

Q: Is every teacher who was certified as of Feb. 1 "grandfathered in" under the old regulations?

A: Anyone who has completed the requirements for and applied for a provisional certificate before Feb. 2

is held to the old rules for certification. That's true even if the State Education Department hasn't reviewed your materials or issued the certificates by Feb. 2. New York State United Teachers has successfully argued that fairness requires the rules not be changed midstream.

TAKE NOTE: If you let a provisional certificate lapse without getting an extension, you fall under the new regulations.

Q: My provisional certificate was issued last year. When I apply for permanent certification, am I subject to the rules for the new professional certificate?

A: No. You can still seek permanent certification, in the same certificate area, under the "old" rules.

Q: How long do I have to complete my master's degree?

A: As long as your provisional certificate is issued with an effective date of Feb. 1 or before, you still have five years (the validity period of a provisional certificate) to obtain a master's in an area functionally related to your certification.

Q: With certificate titles changing drastically, I fear that my school district could use this as an opportunity to change the subjects or grade levels I teach.

A: NYSUT labor relations specialists and local leaders have been vigilant in seeking to head off these kinds of problems. You should contact them if you have concerns.

Q: What happens to my certification if I move to another district?

A: Nothing. Your location has no bearing on teaching certificates, which are issued by SED.

Requirements for new teachers are changing Feb. 2

Six years after a Regents task force called for new standards in teacher preparation, certification and in-service training, those changes take effect Feb. 2, with the first new certificates to be issued Sept. 1.

See next page for details on video requirements

In addition to facing new types of certificates and much narrower certificate

titles, anyone applying for teacher certification on or after Feb. 2 is subject to State Education Department requirements that could include:

- less time to get a master's degree;
- professional development to maintain their certificate; and
- a year of mentoring.

Starting Feb. 2, the time available to get a master's degree has been reduced from five years to three, plus a one-year extension if needed.

Teachers holding professional certificates issued after Feb. 2 will be required to complete 175 hours of professional development every five years.

As with the newly required men-

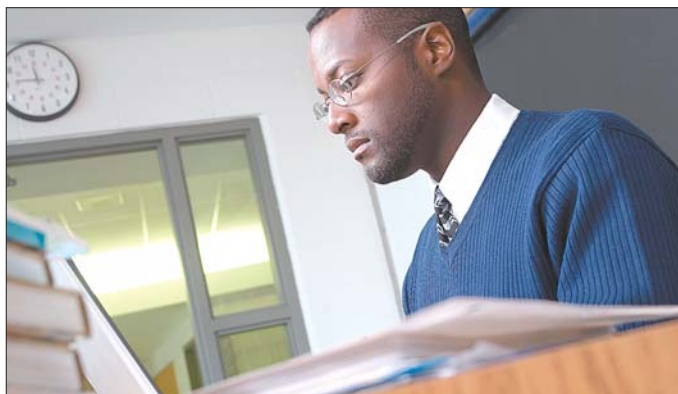
toring provision (*see article on next page*), teachers will have an opportunity to help shape their district's professional development offerings. New York State United Teachers pressed for teachers to have a say in both areas. As a result, teachers selected by their local union must comprise the majority of the committee that draws up the Professional Development Plan, which the state requires of all districts.

The basic new teaching certificates are:

■ **Initial** — Valid for three years. Comparable to the existing provisional certificate, it's generally designed for candidates completing baccalaureate or higher programs; and candidates completing registered teacher preparatory programs.

■ **Transitional** — Valid for three years. Implemented to help ease the teacher shortage, it generally applies to career changers and alternative certification candidates who have a commitment of employment from a school district.

■ **Professional** — Comparable to the existing permanent certificate, it's continuously valid as long as all professional development requirements are met. Issued to candidates holding initial or transitional certi-



icates who have been teaching for three years, have a master's degree and one year of mentoring.

Under the new regulations, certificate titles will be aligned with both school subjects and grade levels in far narrower ranges than currently in place.

For instance, in place of certification in the common branch subjects in grades pre-K through 6, there are now four titles: early childhood education (birth-grade 2); childhood education (grades 1-6); and generalist and specialist in middle childhood education (grades 5-9).

For details and a complete list of

current and new areas of certification, check out NYSUT's Web site at www.nysut.org/research or the SED Web site at www.bigbered.nysed.gov/tcert.

At the SED site, teachers can check their individual New York state certification file and obtain comprehensive certification information. Anyone with specific questions can e-mail SED from the Web site or phone (518) 474-3901.

As always, NYSUT strongly recommends you maintain your own certification file, including copies of all transcripts, certificates and communications.



YOUR CREDENTIALS

Confused about certification? NYSUT can help

New York State United Teachers' Division of Research and Educational Services has teamed up with the union's New Member Program to provide videoconferences on teacher certification for



new members.

Held periodically through the school year at the

statewide union's Albert Shanker Conference Center, the sessions are televised to regional NYSUT offices and BOCES sites throughout the state.

The sessions provide new members with information on obtaining provisional, initial and professional certification.

Check with your local union president or building representative for dates and times.

You're still on candid camera

If you're already in the certification pipeline, the video requirement remains in effect.

For those seeking certification under the "old" (pre-Feb. 2) rules, The Assessment of Teaching Skills-Performance (ATS-P), also known as the "performance video," is required for permanent certification for subject area teachers in grades 7-12; elementary school teachers (Pre-K-grade 6); and teachers of English as a Second Language.

The video will *not* be a requirement for teachers who apply for initial or professional certification after Feb. 2.

However, those teachers will be working under new, more stringent requirements.

Mentoring for rookies starts in September

Beginning in September, candidates for professional teaching certificates must take part in a one-year mentoring program. In a profession that loses nearly half of its teachers in the first five years of their career, mentoring is designed to ease the transition to the classroom and provide newcomers with guidance and support.

If they are to help new teachers become effective teaching professionals, mentoring programs must be "thoughtfully planned, rely on the leadership and support of the district and the local union, and require dedicated resources," said Antonia Cortese, first vice president of New York State United Teachers.

Under regulations approved by the Board of Regents in 2003, mentoring programs now required in every district and BOCES must become part of the local Professional Development Plan.

NYSUT's advocacy secured teachers a role in developing those plans. In fact, a majority of the committee reviewing PDP plans must be teachers appointed by their local union. With the new mentoring regulations lacking specific directives on how programs are to be set up, teachers and their local unions have an opportunity to help design and implement many aspects of their district's program.

Among other requirements, the district's PDP must describe:

- procedures for selecting mentors;



- the mentor's role;
- mentor preparation;
- types of mentoring activities; and
- how much time will be allotted for mentoring.

According to SED's Office of Teaching Initiatives, a district's plan should be submitted to the board of education for approval by June 1.

The relationship between the mentor and the intern or new teacher is to be advisory only. Unless the local union has negotiated otherwise, the mentor's role is to provide guidance and support — not to help supervisors evaluate a new teacher.

Mentor Teacher-Interns

In the 18 years since the New York State Mentor Teacher-Internship Program was created, participants have learned a great deal about what constitutes a quality mentoring experi-

ence. With \$4 million in state funding for 2003-04 that it obtained through lobbying efforts by NYSUT, the program's competitive grants this year are helping 57 districts set up and operate successful mentoring programs.

Cortese notes that the Mentor Teacher-Internship Program models the elements that research, data and experience show are necessary to quality mentoring — collective bargaining, confidentiality, guidance and support, release time, program coordination, evaluation and funding.

Among its professional development programs, NYSUT's Effective Teaching Program offers help in setting up, reviewing and evaluating mentoring programs. For details, call (800) 528-6208.

For an Information Bulletin and other details on mentoring programs, log on to www.nysut.org.

Colleges coping with teacher prep changes

New certification requirements that take effect Feb. 2 also affect college students in elementary and secondary education programs.

The State Education Department now requires teaching-bound college students to log 100 hours of field experience — prior to student teaching — in high-need schools (where at least half the children are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches).

The college students must also work with students of English as a Second Language and those with disabilities.

Field experience might include observation, working with teachers, visiting classrooms, following students through their schedule and possibly working with small groups of students.

"The high-need schools requirement poses a real challenge," said Betsy Balzano, distinguished service professor at the State University of New York at Brockport who supervises student teaching and chairs the college's Professional Education Council. "There are a limited number of schools

for a large number of placements. There is great demand."

Under new state regulations, certification titles and requirements are changing for teachers entering the certification pipeline on or after Feb. 2.

While new requirements are phasing in, most colleges are running two teacher education programs — to meet the needs of students working under "old" and new regulations.

Balzano, who is a member of United University Professions, representing SUNY academic and professional faculty, noted that the need to run parallel programs occurs as public higher ed resources are stretched painfully thin.

Faculty have put in untold hours to revamp programs because "we want to provide candidates with the best experiences and be true to the spirit of the standards," she said.

UUP President William Scheuerman, who heads New York State United Teachers' Higher Education Council, added that "mandates without money" put undue pressure on education departments seeking to prepare the next generation of teachers.

— Liza Frenette





A 'HOUSSE-ful' of federal requirements for teachers

For many in the classroom, one of the most potentially burdensome aspects of the No Child Left Behind Act is that it layers on a requirement that by the end of the 2005-06 school year all teachers be "highly qualified" in all core academic subjects they teach. That's on top of New York state's own rigorous requirements.

But it's not the complicated hurdle it *might* have been. New York State United Teachers' national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers, convinced Congress to drop a proposal that would have required regular, routine testing of all veteran teachers.

Taking the position that New York's teachers are already highly qualified, the State Education Department worked with NYSUT to develop a system that lets teachers demonstrate their qualifications and credentials.

Of course, many veteran teachers will obtain "highly qualified" status as a result of tests they have already taken. For elementary teachers, that includes the Liberal Arts and Sciences Test and the Assessment of Teaching Skills-Written or the National Teaching Exam. Secondary teachers of core academic subjects qualify if they've completed any one of four options in their subject area — a Content Specialty Test, an academic major, 30 credits or a graduate degree.

However, experienced teachers also may choose to demonstrate they meet the "highly qualified" standard by completing a checklist known as the High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation, or HOUSSE.

Checking the list and checking it twice

The HOUSSE option is available to teachers who are "not new to the profession" — those at least a year beyond the effective date of their first teaching certificate.

The HOUSSE, which can be administered during a pre-employment interview or an Annual Professional Performance Review, consists of a series of statements summarizing education, credentials and professional experience. Each statement carries a point value.

Earn 100 points and you're considered highly qualified by the federal government.

For example, pre-K-6 teachers who complete a state-approved graduate program or 30 graduate credits in elementary education, special education, reading or a related field can earn 30 points. Anyone certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards automatically earns the full 100 points.

Ironically, teachers who have completed the checklist note that it has nothing to do with teacher quality or classroom performance.

In most cases, the "highly qualified" standard does not apply to School-Related Professionals or to substitute, private school or pre-K teachers. HOUSSE details are available in NYSUT Information Bulletin No. 200319, available at www.nysut.org.

National certification: teaching's gold standard

Nearly 400 of New York's teachers have earned certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards — a credential that's generally recognized as the gold standard in teaching.

To become nationally certified, successful candidates spend between 200 and 400 hours — sometimes over a year or more — describing in detail the effects of their teaching practices on student performance, documenting knowledge of their subject area and demonstrating their ability to manage and measure student learning.

National certification is not required by either the state or federal government, but because it is regarded as such a sterling credential, it may fulfill other requirements. For example, nationally certified teachers in New York state are exempt for five years from a state requirement taking effect this year that teachers complete 175 hours of professional development every five years. Also, a nationally certified teacher is automatically considered "highly qualified" under requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

"It takes strong motivation and exceptional professional skills to earn this honor," said Antonia Cortese, first vice president of New York State United Teachers. "But teachers find that motivation in their classrooms. They strive to be the best so their students can be their best." Cortese is a former member of the NBPTS board.

Fighting for incentives and helping teachers prepare

NYSUT assists national board candidates by offering programs and professional development through the statewide union's Education and Learning Trust and by supporting professional development programs through the state's network of teacher centers.

New York still lags behind many states, including Oklahoma, Georgia and North Carolina, in its overall number of board-certified teachers. While many states offer salary supplements for teachers who achieve national certification, individual local unions have had to fight for such incentives in New York state. To date, nearly four dozen NYSUT locals have negotiated contractual incentives — including salary and step increases — for teachers who earn the national honor.

Here's how NYSUT can help you reach the goal:

■ NYSUT's Effective Teaching Program has designed a three-credit course to help applicants with the certification process. For details, call ETP at (800) 528-6208.

■ The union works with teacher centers statewide to provide workshops, awareness sessions and other support. For info, call (800) 342-9810, ext. 6040.

■ NYSUT led the fight for the law creating the state's Albert Shanker Grant Program (named after the late, legendary president of the American Federation of Teachers) and the New York State Candidate Fee Subsidy Program, which provides a \$2,500 grant to each candidate to defray application and program costs.

■ NYSUT's Web site, www.nysut.org/nbpts, has an online discussion forum and other national certification-related services.

■ The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards can be reached at (800) 22-TEACH or at www.nbpts.org.

To see a copy of the full HOUSSE form, go to www.highered.nysed.gov/nclb05-2003apdd.htm





YOUR CREDENTIALS

Paraprofessional qualifications also are evolving

Regardless of your title, if you're providing *instructional support services*, New York state requires that you be certified as a teaching assistant. While the new state certification program increases the requirements for anyone who applies for certification as a teaching assistant on or after Feb. 2, it also provides a career ladder for teaching assistants who want to pursue a teaching certificate.

First, here's what's required under *current* state rules, covering anyone whose teaching assistant application is filed by their district on or before Feb. 1:

- You must have a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- Once you're hired, your district must apply for your temporary, one-year license, which can be renewed for an additional year.
- The district must apply for your permanent or "continuing" certificate after you complete one year of experience as a teaching assistant and six

semesters of relevant college courses.

Under the *new* rules on or after Feb. 2, anyone applying for certification as a teaching assistant must have a high school diploma and pass the state's Assessment of Teaching Assistant Skills, then complete a series of requirements leading to a continuously valid certificate.

Of the new certificates, Level I is similar to the current temporary license. It's valid for one year and can be renewed. Level II is valid for two years as candidates work toward Level III.

Level III, the continuously valid certificate paras must eventually obtain, requires 18 hours of college courses and one year of experience.

An elective credential valid for five years, the Pre-professional Certificate is the next level toward an initial teaching certificate. It requires 18 semester hours, matriculation in a teacher prep program and one year of experience.



From left, Marge Brumfield, Rochester Association of Paraprofessionals, NYSUT's Antonia Cortese and Michelle Parker of Greenburgh Civil Service Organization.

A federal case

Be aware that the federal government also has requirements affecting paraprofessionals in Title I programs or schools. For a free copy of NYSUT's guide, *What you should know about new requirements for paraprofessionals who help children learn*, call NYSUT Publications at (800) 342-9810, ext.

6260 or 6271.

Request publication No. 402/03; allow four to six weeks for delivery.

NYSUT's Education and Learning Trust has partnered with a half-dozen colleges to offer the 18-credit undergraduate program for teaching assistants. For details, go to www.nysut.org or call (800) 528-6208.



Education and Learning Trust

New York State United Teachers

Your partner in professional development

Did You Know ...



The NYSUT Education and Learning Trust offers an 18-credit undergraduate program for teaching assistants seeking state certification?



ELT collaborates with five colleges around the state to offer courses you need to meet state and federal requirements?



ELT offers test preparation workshops at many different sites to help you pass the new tests?

For more information, check the NYSUT Web site at www.nysut.org or call (800) 528-



On the horizon: federal grants for early reading

Early-reading initiatives have been a key part of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act and now its latest version — No Child Left Behind.

Designed to assure that every student can read by the end of grade 3, the programs focus on K-3 students and their teachers, who receive extensive staff development, including hands-on help in applying research-based approaches in class.

Reading First

New York state is eligible for more than \$460 million over the next six years of this NCLB program.

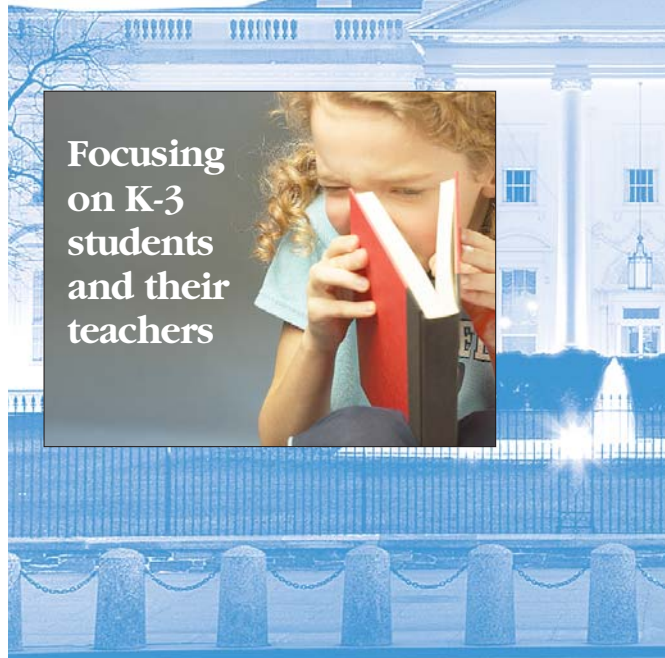
In this first year, 135 school districts and charter schools were eligible to apply, based on student scores on the statewide English Language Arts test given in grade 4 and poverty measures that include identification as a Title I school.

The application deadline closed in January for grants ranging from \$450,000 to \$1.35 million annually per building for up to three years. Grants are based on the number of K-3 students in a building.

Recipients will have to follow some detailed procedures.

The State Education Department, which administers the program in New York, requires that student progress be assessed throughout the year to identify and help struggling readers and to adjust the program. Schools must have a core curriculum in reading skills.

All K-3 teachers are required to participate in professional develop-



Focusing on K-3 students and their teachers

ment in reading instructional strategies through the district and the New York State Reading Academy, an online course for teachers with site-based coaching support.

Additional support will be provided by the network of New York State Regional School Support Centers.

Part of the state's Reading First funds will be used to create a New York State Reading Resource Center to disseminate current research-based findings on effective reading instruction practices.

Local unions play a key role in the program.

The local president must sign the grant application to confirm that the union was substantially involved in its planning.

The application must be integrated into the district's Professional Development Plan. That plan is drawn up by a committee whose majority is teachers designated by the local union.

Reading for Results

In 2001, when New York state

qualified for \$82 million in federal Reading Excellence Act funds, it gained the beginnings of a core curriculum, thanks to dogged efforts by New York State United Teachers.

To secure the three-year grant for the program it called Reading for Results, SED had to establish what is essentially a core curriculum describing reading skills for pre-K-3 students — something NYSUT had been advocating for years.

Following NYSUT's advice, SED consulted with experts in reading research and developed a 49-page core curriculum detailing what students need to know to meet the state's early literacy standards.

That new core curriculum, plus a change in recommended assessments, helped win New York the grant.

Currently, 250 buildings in 58 school districts each receive approximately \$270,000 in Local Reading Improvement funds to support professional development for teachers of literacy in grades K-3.

Buildings participating must have a fulltime reading coordinator, and all K-3 teachers must take part in the online New York Reading Academy.

Of those same districts, 33 receive funds to tutor low-performing students before or after school, on weekends and in summer.

Reading for Results will terminate at the end of the school year. Some recipients of those grants were also deemed eligible to apply for a Reading First grant.

New tests are around the corner

More tests are coming, courtesy of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, students must be tested annually in reading and math in grades 3-8.

To fulfill that mandate, the State Education Department has been seeking bids to develop new tests in math and English Language Arts.

Among other things, SED's request for proposals requires that:

- tests be shorter than those currently given in grades 4 and 8;
- test samplers be available in spring 2004;
- pilot tests be available in spring 2005;
- the first actual test be ready to

administer in winter/spring 2006; and

- all tests in either subject be given at the same time to all grades.

The federal law also mandates that science tests begin in the 2007-08 school year. As with ELA and math, however, New York state tests students in science in grades 4, 8 and in high school.

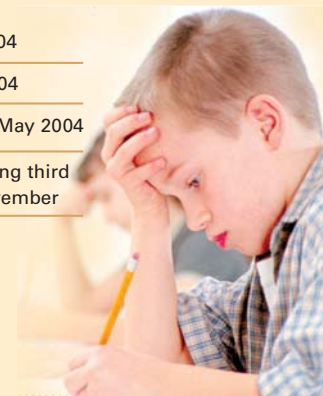
As a result, it already complies with an NCLB mandate that, beginning in 2007-08, students be tested once in each of three grade spans: 3-5, 6-9 and 10-12.

A NYSUT Information Bulletin on the upcoming state tests in grades 3-8 is available at www.nysut.org.

2004 elementary-level New York state test schedule

■ Grade 4 ELA	Feb. 2-6, 2004
■ Grade 4 math	May 4-6, 2004
■ Grade 4 science	Anytime in May 2004
■ Grade 5 social studies	Usually during third week in November

Details on statewide tests are available at www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/





Regents action pending on middle-level education

State action to revise education in the grades that mark the transition from childhood to adolescence — grades 5-8 — is due this spring.

The Board of Regents is slated to act following more than a year of work by its members and the State Education Department to revise policy and regulations on middle-level education.

As the discussion continues, New York State United Teachers remains concerned about a host of issues critical for student success at the middle level, including class-size limitations and a recommended pre-K-12 grade-by-grade core curriculum.

And the statewide union is concerned that if given the “flexibility,” many school boards and administrators would scrap valuable, non-academic courses that are currently mandated.

“The rich variety of courses at the middle level is integral to a student’s education, and NYSUT is firmly advocating that the curriculum retain its breadth as well as its depth,” said Antonia Cortese, NYSUT first vice president.

NYSUT is pressing these concerns in ongoing communications with members of the Board of Regents, with state officials, and in conferences and hearings.



NYSUT is also calling on SED to analyze grade 8 test scores to ascertain where the achievement problems are.

Prompting the state’s effort are several concerns:

First, although they are continuing to improve with each test administered, scores on state assessments given in eighth grade have been disappointing, particularly in high-need school districts with large numbers of disadvantaged students.

Second is the specter of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, which contains sanctions for schools that don’t improve.

Last summer, Regents — who set education policy in New York — approved a new policy statement on middle-level education that seeks to combine, in a standards-focused school program, both academic achievement and personal development of students.

The board is looking at how to implement that broad-based policy and how much leeway to give local school districts in deciding whether students are meeting the state’s 28 learning standards.

Regents, who will ultimately have to approve any regulatory changes, are looking at approaches that range from prescriptive state regs to minimal regs that give districts



maximum local control.

NYSUT leaders continue to meet with SED officials, middle-level teachers and related NYSUT committees as the union develops policy on this important topic, Cortese said.

Caught in the Middle, NYSUT’s 2002 report on middle-level educa-

tion, lays out for parents and other education stakeholders certain “rights” all students in the middle grades should enjoy — rights that teachers believe are critical to students’ success on the eighth-grade state tests, in high school and beyond. The full report is available at www.nysut.org.

2004 middle-level test schedule

Grade 8 math	May 4-5
Grade 8 science written test	Anytime between June 2-17
Grade 8 social studies	June 2-3
Technology education	Optional — school sets date

Details on statewide tests are available at www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/.



New York State United Teachers

Education and Learning Trust

Your partner in professional development



The NYSUT Education and Learning Trust offers a wide variety of graduate courses including these NEW courses at the middle level: **Three credit**

- Middle-Level Education: Foundations for the Middle Years
- Middle-Level Education: Curriculum Instruction and Assessment
- English Language Instruction in Middle and Secondary School
- Reading and Writing Across the Content Areas

One credit

- Data Driven Decisions
- Bully Prevention

For more information, check the NYSUT Web site at www.nysut.org or call (800) 528-6208



Passing-at-55 option is extended for two more years

Acknowledging that some students and some school districts may need a little extra time to reach higher standards, the state Board of Regents has extended for two years a provision that lets districts set 55 as a passing grade for Regents Exams required for graduation.

Affected are students currently in high school and those entering ninth grade in September 2004.

Without the extension, current high school seniors would have been the first students required to score at least 65 on three Regents Exams in order to graduate. That mandate would have been extended to all five required Regents Exams for the class of 2005.

Antonia Cortese, first vice president of New York State United Teachers, praised the board for acting to resolve problems long apparent to the statewide union and its members.

"This is the right move for the kids," Cortese said. "New York has set a very high standard for students, and we now have two more years to get the resources in place without hurting students who saw the standards change midway through their school careers."

As the regulations now stand, students in all school districts must take and pass five Regents Exams — in English, math, science and two social studies courses — in order to graduate from high school. To earn a Regents Diploma they must score at least 65 on each of the five exams.

If it is their school district's policy, students who score between 55



and 64 on any or all of the required Regents Exams can earn a local diploma. That local diploma option is scheduled to end when the mini-

mum passing grade on Regents Exams rises to 65. At that point, only Regents Diplomas will be issued.

The extension of the 55-passing option will be most helpful in urban, high-need districts, which have the majority of students who are scoring between 55 and 64 on Regents Exams.

The Regents, who set education policy in the state, now have two years to look at test scores and consider other options if too many students are still scoring less than 65 on Regents Exams when the extension ends.

One possibility already under discussion among Regents is to allow students who score at least 55 on any Regents Exam to graduate if their average on all required Regents Exams is 65 or higher.

How HS graduation requirements have changed Here's what it takes to earn a diploma, as of Dec. 1, 2003

Students starting grade 9 in:	9/2000	9/2001	9/2002	9/2003	9/2004
Local Diploma	Score 55-64 on 5 Regents Exams and earn 20.5 credits	Score 55-64 on 5 Regents Exams and earn 22 credits		SAME AS 2001	
Regents Diploma	Score 65 or above on 8 Regents Exams and earn 20.5 credits	Score 65 or above on 5 Regents Exams and earn 22 credits		SAME AS 2001	
Advanced Regents Diploma	n/a	Score 65 or above on 8 Regents Exams and earn 22 credits		SAME AS 2001	

Testing options extended for students with disabilities



Maryanne Carro, an assistant teacher, works with a student at the Association for Children with Down Syndrome in Nassau County.

Even as the state phases in higher academic standards, it has continued to provide a "safety net" for students with disabilities. Those who fail a required Regents Exam in a particular subject have been able to take a less-challenging Regents Competency Test and graduate with a local diploma.

Late last year, the state Board of Regents extended that safety net to students entering ninth grade through 2009 who receive special education services.

Special-education students have been increasingly taking and pass-

ing Regents Exams and graduating with Regents Diplomas. However, a substantial performance gap on Regents Exams exists between general- and special-ed students. And the gap widens for students with disabilities in high-need districts, including the state's five biggest cities, where those students are statistically more likely to be educated in separate settings.

Previously, the safety net was scheduled to end for students with disabilities entering ninth grade after 2005.



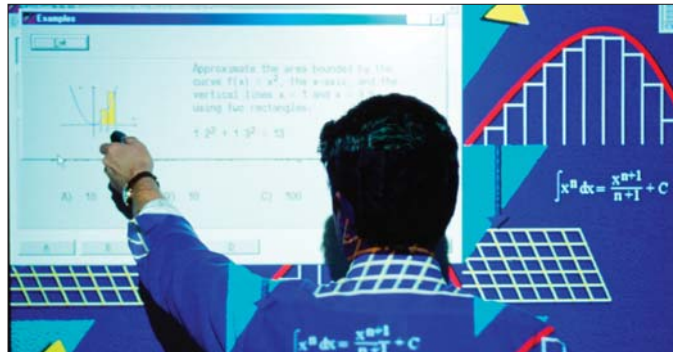
Activism adds up as math testing gets an overhaul

Concern by math teachers and their statewide union in 2003 sparked a massive effort now under way to improve how mathematics is tested and taught in grades K-12.

Since August, the State Education Department and the state Board of Regents have been working to implement the recommendations of a panel they put together to look at the June 2003 Math A Regents Exam and why so many students failed it.

That panel, which included members of New York State United Teachers, not only convinced SED to re-score the June exam, its sweeping recommendations for reform touched off what SED promises will be a series of measures to be undertaken through June 2006 that will affect other courses as well.

Even as it was awaiting the panel's recommendations, SED in August began having teachers conduct whole-test reviews of all Regents



Exams before the tests were administered. NYSUT had been lobbying for this quality-control measure for two years.

The department also committed itself to improving field tests of exams and pledged to add new personnel to its Office of State Assessment and to bolster its staff of

subject-area experts.

Echoing one of the recommendations of the Math A Panel, SED said that by June 2006 it would develop and administer a new Math A Regents Exam that could be taken by a typical student after one year, instead of the current year and a-half.

The panel concluded that the three-semester time frame for Math A wasn't working because after a year of classes, struggling students would lose momentum over the summer and often return to a different teacher for the final semester when they had to close the gap.

In a move that has long been called for by NYSUT, SED also committed to a K-12 grade-by-grade math curriculum by June 2006. It appointed a Mathematics Standards Committee to revise math standards to make them clearer, more tightly focused on the essential knowledge and skills, and easier to apply in the classroom. That committee's work is to be reviewed by a Mathematics Curriculum Committee, whose agenda will include a review of existing

grade-by-grade K-12 mathematics curricula.

Until those long-term changes are made, the Math A exam is being reconfigured to increase the total number of questions from 35 to 39 and increase the number of multiple-choice questions. (See chart below left.)

A calculated decision

The State Education Department has decided that use of graphing calculators will continue to be permitted on the various Math A tests given in 2004. That includes pretests, field tests and the final Regents Exams, which were given this month and will be given again in June and August.

For now, at least, SED has rejected a recommendation of its Math A panel that no students be allowed to use calculators unless they are available to all students statewide. The panel said calculators provide a definite edge to students who can afford them or whose districts can afford to provide them.

SED officials said they will continue to study the issue with the Math Standards Committee the Regents and SED convened late last year to revise math standards.

"We have analyzed the test questions and believe that while there is no advantage for students who use such calculators, we do not want to disadvantage students who have been using them regularly in the classroom," SED said in a statement posted on its Web site.

How the Math A Regents Exam is changing

Section	Old Format	New Format
Part I — multiple-choice	20 questions	30 questions
Part II — open-ended		
2 points maximum per question	5 questions	5 questions
Part III — open-ended		
3 points maximum per question	5 questions	2 questions
Part IV — open-ended		
4 points maximum per question	5 questions	2 questions

NYS English-as-a-Second-Language 2004 test schedule

Offered at all grade levels:

Listening, reading and writing sessions	Anytime between May 10-21
Speaking session	Anytime between April 26-May 21

Details on statewide tests are available at www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/.

More than the sum of its parts

Beginning in April, more high school students will be allowed to retake components of the Math A Regents Exam.

As part of its effort to rework math education, the State Education Department has agreed to allow juniors as well as seniors to take part in Math A component retesting. Now, students in those two grades who have twice failed the math exam can retake the components they failed.

Component retests are provided only in Math A and English. The

English component retest remains limited to seniors.

In all other subjects, students who fail a required Regents Exam must retake the complete exam.

SED last year postponed the planned rollout of component retests for Regents Exams in Global History and Geography and U.S. History and Government.

This year, components of the English exam will be offered from April 26-30. Components of the Math A exam will be offered from April 26-29.



Leveraging action on the physics test

Quantum changes are under way in how physics is tested in New York.

After two years of disappointing results on a new Regents Exam in physics, members of the state Board of Regents agreed the problem was not with the students or their teachers, but with the test itself.

From the time the new version of the test was given in 2002, it simply didn't reflect the board's consensus from 1996 — when new science standards were enacted — that physics should be taught and tested as a course that any hard-working student could master.

Regents, who set education policy in New York, agreed with New

York State United Teachers and concerned physics teachers that passing levels had been set so high they shut out many otherwise high-achieving students not intent on making science a career.

The Regents' decision set into motion a series of actions.

A standards-setting committee composed of more than two dozen teachers and representatives of higher education and industry immediately began working on new passing levels for future Regents Exams in physics, including the one that was given this month.

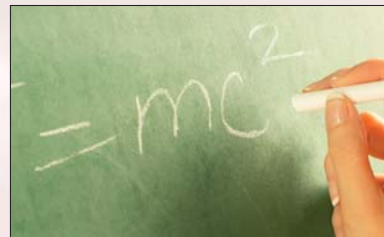
Regents also ordered a rescoring of physics exams given in 2002 and 2003 to some 86,000 students.

That action was completed in January.

In two examples, it raised the passing rate for the June 2003 exam from 53 percent to more than 80 percent, and the June 2002 exam from 61 percent to 77 percent.

As with the Regents Exam in Math A, the problems with some questions on the physics exam led the State Education Department to institute a longtime NYSUT suggestion — that teachers be brought in to review exams before they go out to help catch any errors and check qualities such as readability.

In the wake of complaints about the June 2003 exam, a number of



districts threatened to boycott the elective physics Regents Exam and offer locally produced tests. Although school districts will be required to post a revised score on the permanent record of all physics test-takers from 2002 and 2003, they will have some discretion in how they use the new scores. That is to avoid such problems as lowering the class ranking of one student because another now posts a higher, revised grade in physics.

Regents Exam alternatives

The State Education Department has approved the following as acceptable alternatives to Regents Exams for most students who have successfully completed the course of study for that subject. A NYSUT Information Bulletin on approved alternatives (No. 200405) is available at www.nysut.org.

English

Advanced International Certificate of Education English Exam
 AP Language and Composition Exam
 AP Literature and Composition Exam
 International Baccalaureate English A1 Standard Level Exam
 International Baccalaureate English A1 Higher Level Exam

Mathematics

Advanced International Certificate of Education Math Exam
 AP Calculus AB Exam
 AP Calculus BC Exam
 International Baccalaureate Math Studies Standard Level Exam
 International Baccalaureate Mathematics Methods Standard Level Exam
 International Baccalaureate Mathematics Higher Level Exam
 International General Certificate of Secondary Education
 SAT II Math Level IC
 SAT II Math Level IIC

Science

AP Biology
 SAT II Biology*
 SAT II Chemistry
 SAT II Physics

Global History and Geography

SAT II World History

U.S. History and Government

AP U.S. History
 SAT II U.S. History**

Languages Other Than English

SAT II French Listening and French Reading
 SAT II German Listening and German Reading
 SAT II Modern Hebrew
 SAT II Italian
 SAT II Latin
 SAT II Spanish Listening and Spanish Reading
 SAT II Korean Listening***
 SAT II Chinese Listening***
 SAT II Japanese Listening***

*In addition to achieving an acceptable score, students must complete 1,200 minutes of hands-on lab work with satisfactory lab reports.

**In addition to achieving an acceptable score, students must complete a multi-source, in-depth research project that demonstrates the ability to use primary and secondary sources.

***No Regents Exams offered in these languages.

Earth science lab postponed

The State Education Department has postponed a new lab-practical performance component for the Regents Exam in earth science. SED originally planned to provide the new Part D beginning with the June 2004 exam.

Until it can fill the need for training earth science teachers to prepare for the lab-practical component, SED will continue to provide the current lab-practical compo-

nent of the exam.

New York State United Teachers had been concerned that the change to the new component was coming too soon for SED to provide teacher training and for districts to budget for the needed equipment.

The statewide union will continue to monitor developments, including SED's plans for training.

Regents Exams/ Regents Competency Tests/ Proficiency Exams

2004 Regents Exams

June 16: U.S. History and Government; Physics; Math A
June 17: Comprehensive English: Session 1; Global History and Geography
June 18: Comprehensive English: Session 2; Earth Science; Living Environment
June 22: Comprehensive Examinations in French, Italian, German, Latin, Hebrew and Spanish; Math B
June 23: Chemistry
June 24: Rating Day

2004 Regents Competency Tests

June 16: Writing
June 18: Mathematics
June 21: U.S. History and Government; Science
June 22: Global Studies
June 23: Reading
June 24: Rating Day

2004 Proficiency Exams

June 21: Languages Other Than English (French, Italian, German, Latin and Spanish); Introduction to Occupations

Details on statewide tests are available at www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/.



New York State United Teachers

Education and Learning Trust



Your partner in professional development ... with graduate level courses, including full master's degree programs, seminars, workshops and inservice programs on topics designed to improve professional skills and content delivery. The courses are offered statewide throughout the year and can be used in part to meet certification requirements. The Trust also offers a professional development program for School-Related Professionals.

**Mark your calendar for summer registration
beginning March 2004**

**For more information, call (800) 528-6208
or check the NYSUT Web site at www.nysut.org**



Statewide union serves as your ally on professional issues

Your advocate, your assistant, your ally. Those are some of the roles New York State United Teachers plays as your professional partner in helping students reach high standards.

NYSUT leaders amplify your concerns and advocate at the highest state levels for the resources you need and *against* faddish or bureaucratic impediments to learning.

The union's Research and Educational Services Division works to ensure that state initiatives are

research-based. NYSUT publications provide the latest information that affects you on the job. In the box below is a sampling of publications you can order; single copies are free.

Communicating with you

NYSUT's Web site offers information and resources at www.nysut.org, including articles from *New York Teacher*, NYSUT's bi-weekly newspaper, which is circulated to more than 500,000 readers through-

out the school year.

The Web site also carries Information and Briefing Bulletins from NYSUT's Division of Research and Educational Services on a variety of topics, explaining new laws, regulations and positions that affect members and educational programs.

Effective Teaching Program

Through NYSUT's Education and Learning Trust, the Effective Teaching Program offers professional development courses geared to the new standards. ETP also provides master's degree programs, graduate-level education courses, seminars, workshops and inservice programs on topics designed to improve professional skills and content delivery.

The courses are offered statewide throughout the year and can be used in part to meet certification requirements. ETP also offers a professional development program for School-Related Professionals. For details, call (800) 528-6208.

Subject area committees

Looking for new ideas and approaches to use in the classroom? Six of NYSUT's nine subject area committees have developed hands-on manuals and a series of content-based workshops designed to assist teachers in creating lessons that can help students master the standards. Committees meet regularly, and their members are experts in their subject area. Workshops can be presented at teacher centers and other locations throughout the state.

For details or information on scheduling, contact Elizabeth Sheffer at NYSUT's Division of Research and Educational Services: esheffer@nysutmail.org.

Advocacy role

NYSUT is a tireless advocate on key issues in public education,

health care and higher education. Leaders and staff are in regular contact with members of the state Legislature, the Board of Regents and the State Education Department, sharing member concerns on topics from curriculum to hospital staffing to certification.

Supporting teacher centers

The union continues to lobby for maintenance of funding for the state's network of teacher centers, and supports an active NYSUT Task Force on Teacher Centers. These centers provide essential courses teachers need to help students meet standards. Contact your local teacher center to find out what resources are available in your area.

National affiliation

NYSUT also advocates at the federal level through its national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers. AFT provides the Educational Research and



Dissemination program. This union-sponsored, research-based professional development program helps teachers enhance their knowledge and skills in reading, mathematics, student behavior and assessment. For details, log on to www.aft.org.

Other resources

State Education Department curriculum resource guides, standards and sample tests are available at www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai. Printed copies and CD-ROMs are also available for a fee (usually less than \$10) from the SED Publications Sales Desk, third floor, Education Building, Washington Avenue, Albany, N.Y. 12234, or call (518) 474-3806.

Peer-reviewed, standards-based lesson plans are available from SED's Academy of Teaching and Learning at www.nysatll.nysed.gov.

WORDS TO THE WISE

New York State United Teachers offers members publications designed to provide useful information on state standards and tests and strengthen the ties between schools and parents. Except where indicated, all copies are free.

For members:

■ **A Guide to Special Education**, co-produced with the New York Congress of Parents and Teachers. What teachers need to know about special ed for students ages 3 to 21. Publication No. 109. Single copies free; 2-25 copies, 30 cents each; over 25 copies, 25 cents each.

■ **Minding Their DBQs: Tips for Helping Your Students Master Document-Based Questions**. Many suggestions for K-12. Publication No. 201.

■ **Ten Things You Should Never Do During a Parent-Teacher Conference**. This resource guide offers suggestions for a successful conference. Publication No. 202.

■ **What You Should Know about New Requirements for Paraprofessionals Who Help Children Learn**. This new publication helps School-Related Professionals understand state and federal requirements on the job. Publication No. 402. Single copies free; Multiple copies may be ordered through SRP leaders or local union presidents.



■ **Back-to-School Night**. Outlines strategies by instructors in NYSUT's Effective Teaching Program. Publication No. 203.

For parents:

■ **Helping Your Child Learn to Read**. A joint project of NYSUT's national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers, and the U.S. Department of Education. Publication No. 100. Single copies free; additional copies 50 cents each.

■ **What is a DBQ?** Explains document-based questions for parents of children in grades K-12. Publication No. 101.

■ **What You Need to Know about the Grade 4 ELA Test**. Helps parents of children pre-K-4 understand what to expect and

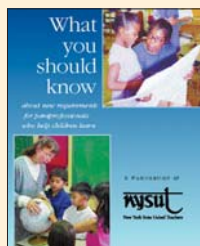
how to prepare for the English Language Arts test given in grade 4. Publication No. 102. Individual copies are free. Larger quantities must be ordered through local union presidents.

Order from NYSUT Publications, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, N.Y. 12110-2445; e-mail jmalec@nysutmail.org.

Please type "brochures" in subject line and be specific about those you are requesting. You can also order by calling (800) 342-9810 ext. 6260, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Please specify the title and publication number of the item you want, and

include your name, address and phone number. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.



This special section was developed by
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Division of Research and Educational Services

- Articles by John Strachan except where noted • Updated January 2004
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- Additional copies of this guide are available while supplies last. Write NYSUT Publications, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, N.Y. 12110-2455; e-mail jmalec@nysutmail.org; or call (800) 342-9810, ext. 6260. Ask for item No. 204/04 from the Publications Department.