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# Graduation Measures Blue Ribbon Commission Members Announced

## Vice Chancellor Finn and Regent Chin to Serve as Co-Chairs of the Commission

### 64 Commission Members Encompass Diversity in Backgrounds, Ethnicity, Geographic Regions, and Areas of Expertise

The Graduation Measures Blue Ribbon Commission will be co-chaired by Vice Chancellor Josephine V. Finn and Regent Judith Chin, Commissioner Betty A. Rosa announced today. Under the direction of the co-chairs, the 64 members of the Blue Ribbon Commission will undertake a thoughtful and inclusive process to explore what a state diploma should signify to ensure educational excellence and equity for every student in New York State. Commission members represent a diverse cross-section of stakeholders, including educators, administrators, researchers, school counselors, professionals from business and higher education, parents, and students.

Chancellor Lester W. Young, Jr. said, "Our review of the state's graduation measures is about ensuring all students are provided with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in the way that best suits them. To create equity, we must be able to take all young people from where they are and bring them to where they want to be so their dreams can be fulfilled. This work is not about lowering standards, it's about making sure the standards work for all our state's students. I look forward to reviewing the Commission's recommendations on this valuable endeavor."

Commissioner Rosa said, "Forming the Blue Ribbon Commission is a significant milestone in our efforts to review the state's current graduation measures. We used a deliberate and thoughtful process to convene a diverse group of experts to help ensure educational excellence and equity for every student in New York State. I thank all the nominees for their interest in this exciting initiative, and I look forward to learning from the esteemed members of the Commission."

In addition to serving as Co-Chairs of the Commission, Vice Chancellor Finn and Regent Chin will lead the Steering Committee and oversee each of the subcommittees. Commission members will serve on either the Program Requirements and Learning Experiences Subcommittee or the Measurements and Assessment Subcommittee. Regent Frances G. Wills and Regent Aramina V. Ferrer will also sit on the Commission. In addition, the Department will form a parent advisory committee and a student advisory committee to weigh in on proposals throughout the process.

Board of Regents members and stakeholder groups submitted nominees for consideration for the Commission. In addition, members of the education community and the general public could submit

applications. In total, the Department received over 400 completed applications and used a rigorous process to review applications.

In selecting members for the Commission, careful consideration was taken to ensure the Commission will include members who reflect the diversity of our state with [varying experiences, perspectives, and expertise](#).

The Blue Ribbon Commission will develop recommendations to the Board of Regents on what measures of learning and achievement could better serve New York's diverse student population as indicators of what they know and of their readiness for college, career, and civic life. The Commission will begin meeting this fall and will meet regularly through spring 2024.

Recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission will be developed through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Commission's final report is expected to be presented to the Board of Regents for consideration in the late spring or summer of 2024.

In addition to Vice Chancellor Finn, Regent Chin, Regent Wills, and Regent Ferrer, the list of members is below. In addition, the Department will select at least three additional students to serve on the Commission in the coming weeks.

- **Jaan Aarismaa**, Welding Instructor, Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego BOCES
- **Francine Almash**, Adjunct Professor, City College Center for Worker Education
- **Richard Altabe**, Principal and Executive VP, Hebrew Academy of Long Beach
- **Elizabeth Angeles**, VP for Advocacy, United Way of NYC
- **Stephen Beovich**, Superintendent, Mount Pleasant-Cottage School District
- **Donna Bonanno**, Principal, Public School 60, NYCDOE
- **David Brown**, Superintendent, DeRuyter Central Schools
- **Samantha Bruno**, Recent Student, Eastern Suffolk BOCES
- **Dia Bryant**, Executive Director, Education Trust - New York
- **Kerri Bullock**, Assistant Superintendent, Instructional Support Services at Broome-Tioga BOCES
- **Joyce Carr**, Supervisor of Special Education and Support Services, Elmira City School District
- **Amanda Centor**, Special Education Teacher, NYCDOE PS 182
- **Pagee Cheung**, Co-Executive Director, Math, Engineering, and Science Academy
- **Alexandria Connally**, DEI Director, Nyack School District
- **Tim Cox**, Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Support Services, Cattaraugus-Allegany BOCES
- **Gladys Cruz**, District Superintendent, Questar III BOCES
- **Juliet Eisenstein**, Staff Attorney, Advocates for Children
- **Kristie Farr**, Theater Educator, Indian River CSD
- **Kim Fontana**, Superintendent, Pawling Central School District
- **Sheree Gibson**, Former Chair of the Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council and Member of the Title 1 Committee of Practitioners
- **Jordan Gonzalez**, Lead Resource Specialist, Long Island RBERN
- **Tricia Gonzalez-Johnson**, Social Studies TOA, Rochester City School District
- **Stanley Harper**, Superintendent, Salmon River CSD
- **Tolga Hayali**, Superintendent, Science Academies of NY Charter Schools
- **Catherine Huber**, District Superintendent, Otsego Northern Catskills BOCES
- **David Hursh**, Professor, Warner Grad School of Education, University of Rochester
- **Jo James**, Special Education Teacher, WSWHE BOCES
- **Brian Jones**, Director of Center for Educators and Schools, NYC Public Library
- **Cynthia Jones**, Principal on Special Assignment, Niagara Falls City School District
- **Lorna Lewis**, Superintendent, Malverne UFSD
- **Daniel Lindsay**, Math Teacher, NYCDOE

- **Susan Lipman**, Board Trustee, Eastern Suffolk BOCES
- **Timothy Lisante**, Executive Superintendent/Chancellor's Cabinet Member, NYCDOE
- **Donna Lobato**, Principal, New Dawn Charter School
- **Tamara Mariotti**, Coordinator of Accessibility Resources, Mohawk Valley Community College
- **Stephen Marositz**, Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Archdiocese of New York
- **Jeffrey Matteson**, District Superintendent, Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga BOCES
- **Winonah McCoy**, Instructional Coach, LaFayette CSD, and Principal, OCM-BOCES Regional Summer School
- **Alprentice McCutchen**, Social Studies Teacher, New Rochelle High School
- **Melissa Melkonian**, Executive Director, American Dream Charter School II
- **Frankie Miranda**, President, Hispanic Federation
- **Fatima Morrell**, Associate Superintendent, Office of Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Initiatives, Buffalo Public Schools
- **David Mumper**, Resource Specialist, Southern Westchester BOCES/Hudson Valley RBERN
- **Edward Placke**, Executive Director, Green Chimneys
- **Michael Prayor**, Superintendent, NYCDOE Brooklyn South
- **Edwin Quezada**, Superintendent, Yonkers Public Schools
- **Carolyn Quintana**, Deputy Chancellor of Teaching and Learning Opportunities, New York City Department of Education
- **Amber Rangel-Mooney**, VP of Workforce Development, Empire State Development
- **Roberto Rijos**, VP and CIO, Konica Minolta Healthcare Americas, Inc.
- **Linda Romano**, CTE/Health Teacher, Newburgh Enlarged City School District
- **Christopher Rosa**, President and CEO, The Viscardi Center and Henry Viscardi School
- **Sagario Rudecindo-O'Neill**, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction and Student Support, Beacon City School District
- **Stephen Sireci**, Professor, College of Education - Center for Educational Assessment - UMASS Amherst
- **Robert Snyder**, President, NYS Loving Education at Home
- **Andrea Soonachan**, Dean of K-16 Initiatives, CUNY
- **Marion Terenzio**, President, SUNY Cobleskill
- **Terjuana Teruel**, Principal, Universal School
- **Andre Torres**, Head of Guidance/College & Career Counselor, Manhattan Bridges High School
- **Luis Torres**, PS 55 Principal, NYCDOE
- **Sarah Truelsch**, Researcher, CUNY
- **Jachan Watkis**, K-12 Director of MST, Rocky Point UFSD
- **Christopher White**, Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Development, NYS Department of Labor
- **Kelly Whitney-Rivera**, Director of Counseling, Valley Stream Central High School
- **Bobson Wong**, Math Teacher, Bayside HS

Additional information about the Graduation Measures initiative can be found on the [Department's Graduation Measures website](#).

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# ★ Graduation advisory body

64-member panel to report by '24 on diploma requisites

BY JOHN HILDEBRAND  
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State education leaders on Tuesday named a 64-member panel, including school superintendents, teachers, parents and others, to advise on what is shaping up as potentially the biggest transformation of high school graduation standards in a quarter century.

Described as a “blue ribbon” commission, the advisory group is scheduled to start meeting monthly this fall to review the state’s complex diploma requirements. The panel is supposed to turn in a final report with recommendations by summer 2024.

At least eight Long Islanders have been appointed. They include Richard Altabe, principal and executive vice president of the Hebrew Academy of Long Beach; Samantha Bruno, a recent student at Eastern Suffolk BOCES; Jordan Gonzalez, lead resource specialist with the Long Island Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network; and Lorna Lewis, superintendent of Malverne schools.

Other Long Islanders are: Susan Lipman, board trustee with Eastern Suffolk BOCES; Christopher Rosa, president and CEO of the Viscardi Center and Henry Viscardi School; Jachan Watkis, K-12 director of mathe-

matics, science and technology in the Rocky Point school district; and Kelly Whitney-Rivera, director of counseling at Valley Stream Central High School.

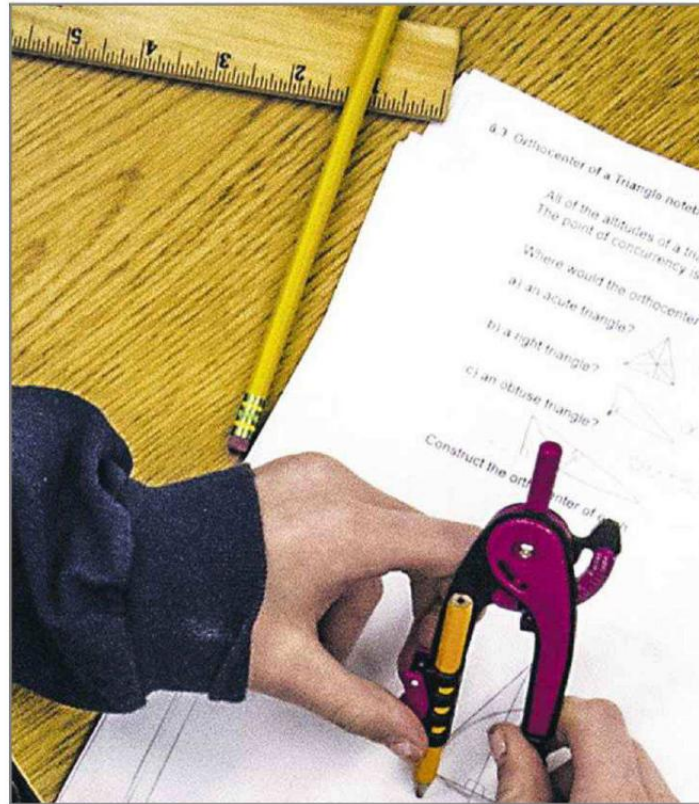
Lewis, a former president of the New York State Council of School Superintendents, said she was honored by the appointment to what she described as a “life-changing initiative.”

“They say when you teach, you touch the future,” Lewis added. “This work puts real meaning to ensuring successful trajectories for all of our learners. It just may be the most important work I will ever be involved in.”

State Education Department staffers said the advisory commission reflects New York’s racial and ethnic diversity, in that its membership is 53% white, 19% Hispanic, 16% Black, 6% multiracial, 3% Asian and 3% Native American. The group includes 13 experts on helping students with disabilities, 11 school superintendents, 10 principals, eight classroom teachers, four business representatives and three parents, among others.

State Education Commissioner Betty A. Rosa and other officials said their new advisers will help identify the skills and knowledge needed by high school graduates to succeed in the 21st century. Another focus will be to find “equivalent” pathways to diplomas for students now struggling to pass state Regents exams.

Rosa, who announced the appointments Tuesday, called formation of the commission “a



The “blue ribbon” panel includes at least eight Long Islanders.

significant milestone in our efforts to review the state’s current graduation measures.”

Currently, those measures include a requirement that virtually all students pass at least four or five Regents exams with scores of 65 or higher. This approach was adopted in 1996 with considerable fanfare, on grounds that it would prevent large numbers of teenagers from being “tracked” into lower quality,

non-Regents courses.

In recent years, Rosa and her colleagues have talked of the need to “rethink” the state’s use of Regents exams. No decisions have yet been reached on how this might be done. But any major pullback in the use of Regents exams would mark a dramatic change in approach.

Some supporters of traditional standards fear this pullback might already be under-

way. In May, the Regents board agreed to allow local school superintendents to award graduation credit to students for exam scores as low as 50. On Tuesday, the board amended and extended the policy for students graduating in 2022-23.

State education officials described the latest move as temporary, and intended to provide relief to students whose classwork might have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Critics, on the other hand, denounced the action as a troubling signal of what may lie ahead.

Dia Bryant, executive director of The Education Trust-New York, said her group was “deeply concerned” by extension of the 50-point rule, and felt that officials should focus more effort on using federal COVID-19 relief funds to help students at risk of not graduating.

“This sends the wrong message to students and families beginning one of the most important school years in recent history,” Bryant said in a statement. “The amendment continues a troubling trend by the Board of Regents to dilute graduation standards and raises serious concerns about whether our education system is preparing students for their postsecondary futures.”

Bryant, who was among those named to the commission Tuesday, said she was honored and looking forward to helping come up with graduation standards ensuring that all students would leave high school “prepared for the brightest possible future.”

## Private schools must meet standards by Dec.

BY JOHN HILDEBRAND  
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Private schools, including Jewish yeshivas, that fail to meet the state’s minimum academic standards will be expected to start upgrading their instruction before Dec. 1, under new rules given final approval Tuesday by the state’s Board of Regents.

This latest overhaul of the state’s 127-year-old compulsory-education law gives non-public schools options: Either they take steps on their own to meet traditional standards,

such as obtaining formal academic accreditation, or call on public boards of education to approve their coursework.

The law, adopted in 1895, requires all nonpublic schools to provide academic education “substantially equivalent” to that in the public sector, apart from any religious lessons those schools might choose to give. State Education Commissioner Betty A. Rosa, described the equivalence requirement Monday as “a commitment we have that we must live up to.”

On Long Island and across the state, the majority of non-

public schools already meet state requirements to provide academic instruction, according to New York education authorities and school representatives. There are more than 1,800 such schools statewide.

However, a group of more than 30 Jewish yeshivas in Brooklyn and Rockland County have denounced the new rules as government overreach and have vowed to continue operating “with or without the blessing or support of state leaders in Albany.” The protesting schools are sponsored by the Hasidic branch of Judaism, which is

known for its religious conservatism and social seclusion.

Many experts expect the dispute over state standards to wind up in court.

Education officials have wrestled with the “equivalency” issue since 2015, when a group of former yeshiva students and their parents filed a lawsuit against four schools. The plaintiffs contended that the schooling of boys had focused so much on religion, taught mostly in Yiddish, that recipients never gained skills in English and calculation needed to function in modern society.



Betty A. Rosa

AP / HANS PENNING