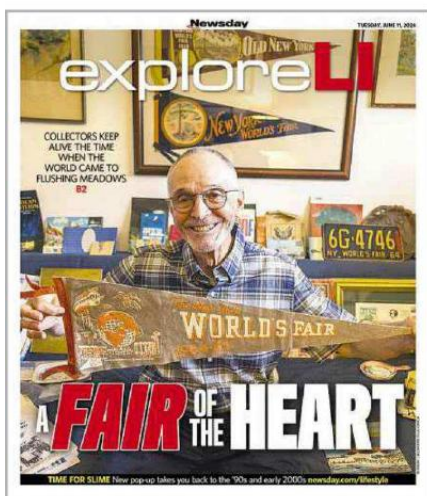


FIRST IN NEWSDAY

CHARGES SET TO BE DISMISSED AGAINST SBU PROTESTERS

A4 | VIDEO AT NEWSDAY.TV



WORLD'S FLAIR

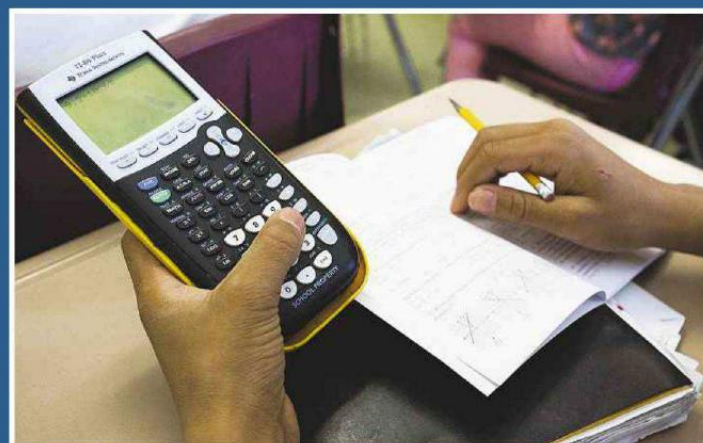
Collectors keep
memory of
Flushing Meadows
exhibition alive

INSIDE

STATE PROPOSES SWEEPING CHANGES TO REGENTS TEST RULES

Passing exams
would no longer
be graduation
requirement
under board's
proposal

A2-3 | VIDEO AT NEWSDAY.TV



Students would be allowed other options for demonstrating knowledge and skills, such as research projects or public service.

HEATHER WALSH

HORSESHOE CRABS

Legislation bans use for fishing, biomedical research **A6-7**

DOULAS

State order expands access for pregnant, birthing or postpartum NYers **A5**

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TOP STORIES

PLAN WOULD DROP

Projects, service could be enough for graduation

BY JOHN HILDEBRAND
john.hildebrand@newsday.com

Passage of state Regents exams, an academic staple for more than 150 years, would no longer be required for high school graduation, under a sweeping plan outlined Monday during a two-hour meeting of the Board of Regents in Albany.

Also up for elimination are Regents diplomas, which thousands of students earn each year by passing at least four exams and related courses.

Supporters describe the plan as an effort to meet student needs in the 21st century; opponents, as a downgrade of standards.

To replace traditional exam requirements, students under the plan would be allowed other options for demonstrating knowledge and skills — for ex-

WHAT TO KNOW

- **New York, under a new state plan**, would drop its requirement that students pass traditional Regents exams to graduate from high school.
- **As an alternative, students could demonstrate** skills through completion of research projects, public service and other achievement.
- **Supporters say the plan will help** more students graduate; opponents counter by calling this a slip in standards.

ample, completion of year-end class projects or performance of public service. High school diplomas would continue to be issued, but there would be only one such credential, rather than the Regents-level and “local” diplomas now available.

The status of Regents exams has been discussed and debated by Regents before, most

notably at a Nov. 13 meeting featuring recommendations from an advisory panel. Monday’s report by state education officials was notable for its explicit description of what lies ahead, including the proposed “sunset” of exam requirements.

State education officials who launched the movement several years ago, have contended the shift will allow greater numbers of students to qualify for graduation. On Monday, Education Commissioner Betty A. Rosa referred to the plan as a “bold vision,” while acknowledging that much work by state and local school authorities remains to be done.

“It takes an incredible amount of time, work and collaborative effort to transform an education system, and we will not stop working until we get the job done right for all New Yorkers,” Rosa said in a statement.

Rosa and her department associates have added that students will continue to take mandated exams in three subjects — English, algebra and a science

LI a stronghold as state

ONLY IN NEWSDAY

BY JOHN HILDEBRAND
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New York State and Long Island are home to hefty numbers of students who succeed in college-level coursework while still in high school, national and regional surveys show.

The latest state rankings put New York in second place, behind Massachusetts, in numbers of teens who pass at least one college-level Advanced Placement test before graduating from high school. The list is published annually by the College Board, a Manhattan-based nonprofit that sponsors AP courses and exams.

According to the College Board, 28.9% of public school students in New York’s Class of 2023, or a total of 51,234 students, passed one or more AP tests before graduating. Those three-hour assessments mea-

sure achievement in college-level studies, ranging from art history to calculus BC, and are usually taken in May.

Tests are scored on a scale of 0 to 5, with 3 or higher considered passing. Passing grades in AP classes are widely accepted for college credit.

“I wanted to challenge myself with a hard math course,” said Erin Garnier, 16, a junior at Valley Stream North High School who is taking an AP pre-calculus course this year.

Massachusetts topped the College Board list, as it often does, with 31.3% of its 2023 graduates passing the exams. Other high-ranking states, in order of achievement, were New Jersey in third place at 28.6%, Florida fourth at 28.4% and Connecticut fifth at 27.9%.

The average national student percentage was 21.7%.

The latest results mark the second consecutive year that New York has held the No. 2 spot and somewhat of an academic comeback. New York

had slipped as low as eighth place among states in AP rankings in 2019 before bouncing back to third in 2021 and second in 2022.

High performers on LI

A large part of the state’s success can be traced to high performance in many of Long Island’s districts.

One example is provided in the latest ratings report on public high schools by U.S. News & World Report, which is based partly on results of AP testing. The report listed 20 Island schools including those in Jericho, Garden City and Manhasset, among the top 1,000 in the country.

Also, in 2022, Newsday reviewed results of AP testing from the previous year in more than 600 districts statewide, including 98 in Nassau and Suffolk counties.

It found that the Island’s school systems did relatively well in terms of the proportion of students passing AP tests.

NY REGENTS EXAM REQUIREMENT

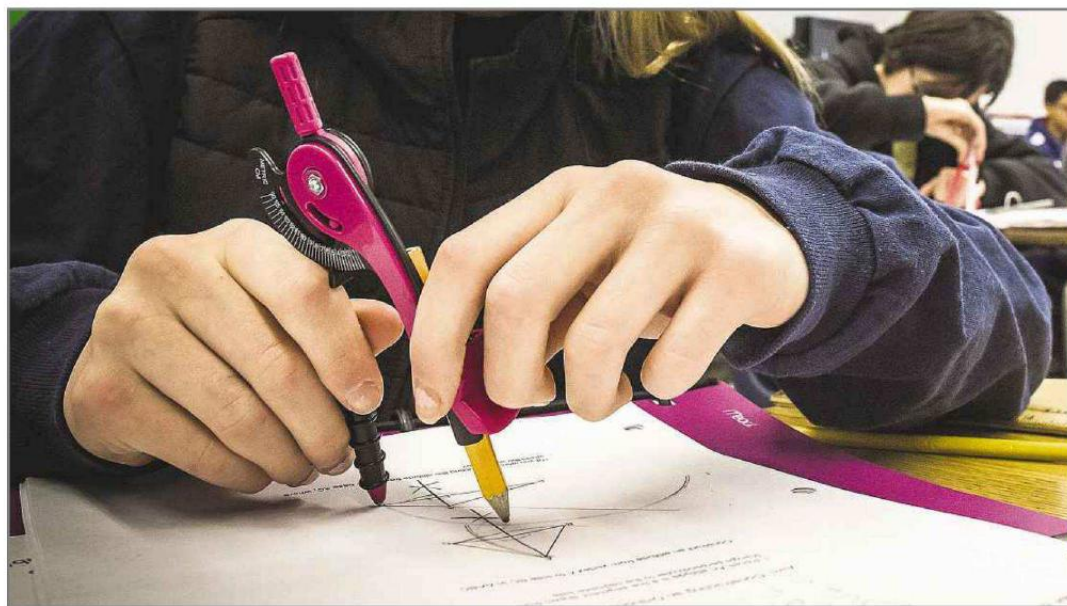
— because these are required by federal law. While students would be required to take these exams, they wouldn't be required to pass them to graduate. However, that law does not require testing in history and government — a fact that stirs deep concerns among social studies educators on Long Island.

"I'm so flabbergasted, it's hard to find the words," said Gloria Sesso, president of the Long Island Council for the Social Studies, which represents about 1,100 school supervisors and teachers in the region.

"It seems they're betraying their commitment to make sure students are knowledgeable of the history of their country," Sesso added, when told of the education department's latest plan. "And we can't be sure students know it, unless we have the exam results to show it."

Newsday readers also messaged their opinions.

"The dumbing down of educational standards in NY. Absolutely deplorable," wrote Gabriele K. Libbey, a resident of Harbor Isle in Hempstead Town



Regents exams are expected to be removed as high school graduation requirement. ■ Video: newsday.tv

and a retired speech teacher.

Rosa and other department officials have said that their plan, in addition to its impact on Regents exams, would encourage instruction in financial literacy and other subjects

geared to prepare teens for adult life. Critics, including leaders of the social-studies group, have contended the shift would leave the state without a uniform means of measuring scholastic achievement in more

than 600 districts across the state and 124 on the Island.

Officials expect to hold a series of public forums, then present a more detailed plan to Regents in November. There's no date for when this could be

implemented.

The plan already has won tentative endorsements from state-level school groups including unionized teachers, school-board representatives and superintendents.

Robert Lowry, deputy director of advocacy, research and communication for the New York State Council of School Superintendents, described Monday's report as "the next step toward translating that vision into actual specific changes." He added his group would now canvass members to see if the state's recommendations "match their hopes and expectations."

In contrast, Ken Girardin, research director of the Empire Center for Public Policy, a fiscally conservative think tank, contended that academic achievement in New York was often mediocre, despite educational spending higher than that of any other state.

"The Regents are simultaneously failing students, employers and taxpayers," Girardin added.

2nd in AP test success

Among districts scoring in the top 10% statewide, the Island had nearly half, with 29 districts out of 60.

"The outcome of AP testing is another testament to the high quality of public education on Long Island," said Bob Vecchio, executive director of the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association. "The vast majority of districts on the Island offer AP courses, and some are expanding those offerings."

A Newsday survey of all the Island's districts, conducted in recent weeks as part of annual school budget coverage, asked among other things whether they planned on program expansions during the coming year. What Newsday found was a mixture of situations among local districts that provided cause for both hope and concern.

On one hand, a few districts facing fiscal stresses reported plans to cut one or two AP courses in their high schools. However, the great majority of re-

sponding districts indicated they expected to preserve all academic programs and services in 2024-25, with some planning for expansion.

More options for some

Westbury High School, for example, will begin offering International Baccalaureate courses next year, making it the 11th school in the region to do so. IB courses, like those provided through AP, are taught at a college level and widely accepted for credit by colleges and universities.

Meanwhile, Manhasset High School plans to open a new class in AP macroeconomics, with 34 students already requesting permission to enroll. Also, the Valley Stream Central High School District is adding AP courses in African American studies at all three of its high schools.

Valley Stream school administrators said they like to add new courses for students whenever the College Board makes

them available. In the current year, for example, the district has added AP precalculus at those same schools. Administrators add that more than 200 students, mostly 11th graders, are currently enrolled in precalculus.

"We're proud that, when given the opportunity, so many of our students choose the more rigorous path," said Jennifer DiMaio, the district's assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

Precalculus is the sort of advanced course that employs terminology scary to many non-mathematicians, with terms such as polynomials, parameters, vectors and matrices. Put more simply, precalculus is a tool useful to society in any number of measurements, ranging from increases or decreases in agricultural crop yields, to the amount of time required to fill a pool with water.

Dara Szejewski, who teaches precalculus and calculus at Valley Stream North

WHAT TO KNOW

■ **New York ranks second among all states**, after Massachusetts, in percentages of students passing at least one college-level Advanced Placement test before graduating from high school.

■ **Many high schools on Long Island contribute** to the state's standing by graduating large numbers of students with credit from college-level Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams.

■ **The great majority of the region's school districts** continue to maintain college-level coursework, and some are expanding those programs while a few others cut back.

High School, sees opportunity in the expansion of math courses.

"It just opens up more doors for the kids," said Szejewski, who has taught for more than 20 years. "You know, it's funny.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT ACHIEVEMENT: TOP 10 STATES

States ranking highest in percentage of Class of 2023 high school graduates passing at least one AP exam.

State	Student %
Massachusetts	31.3%
New York	28.9%
New Jersey	28.6%
Florida	28.4%
Connecticut	27.9%
Illinois	27.5%
Maryland	27.4%
California	26.6%
Colorado	26.5%
Virginia	25.5%

SOURCE: COLLEGE BOARD

Everyone asks what I do and I say 'I teach math' and everyone is like, 'Aww man, I was terrible at math. I don't like math.' But you know, it's rewarding. I love getting the kids excited for math and making sure they don't hate it."