



THE LONG ISLAND COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES

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January 2026,

Dear Members of the New York State Board of Regents,

On behalf of the membership of the Long Island Council for the Social Studies, we write to share concerns regarding the implementation of the New York State Portrait of a Graduate, specifically as it relates to social studies instruction.

As social studies educators and leaders, we value the goals embedded in the Portrait of a Graduate and recognize its potential to promote civic readiness, critical thinking, and informed engagement. However, at this time, there is a lack of clarity regarding how these expectations are intended to be implemented within social studies classrooms. Districts and teachers are unsure how the Portrait will align with existing social studies standards, course curricula, assessments, and graduation requirements.

Without clear guidance, implementation risks becoming inconsistent across districts, placing an undue burden on teachers to interpret expectations independently while also meeting current mandates. Many educators are asking whether the Portrait of a Graduate represents a philosophical framework, a set of assessable competencies, or an additional accountability measure. There is a lack of communication as to if and how it should concretely inform instruction, curriculum design, and student evaluation in social studies.

We respectfully request clearer communication and practical guidance from the State, such as

- A definition of what constitutes an acceptable demonstration of proficiency in the New York State Social Studies Framework in the absence of required Regents exams.
- Examples of approved or recommended assessment models (e.g., performance-based assessments, document-based tasks, portfolios, capstone projects, etc.).
- A statement as to when the State will provide vetted assessment models or rubrics, or whether districts are expected to design their own.
- Guidance on how districts should document and report that students have met graduation-level expectations in social studies.
- Clarification of the specific evidence districts will be expected to retain for audit, compliance, or legal purposes.
- A description of how social studies proficiency will be reflected in student transcripts, seals, endorsements, or diploma notations under the new system.

We are eager to share your responses with the 1100 members of the Long Island Council for the Social Studies. Providing this clarity would support thoughtful, equitable implementation. Thank you for considering the perspectives of social studies educators across Long Island who are working to bring these initiatives to life in classrooms every day.

Respectfully,

Gloria Sesso,

President, LICSS (on behalf of the LICSS Executive Board)