



NY STATE ASSESSMENTS: FAULTY PREDICTIONS, SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

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Every aspect of the Regents reform agenda is aimed at ensuring that more New York State students graduate college and career ready. We have adopted more rigorous Common Core standards and are aligning our assessments with those standards; we're going to create data systems that provide parents and educators with information that's more useful and more transparent; we're going to ensure that classroom teachers and school leaders are better trained, thoughtfully evaluated, and better supported; and we're going to help our lowest performing schools turn their performance around or replace them with innovative educational options. We are confident that these reforms will advance both equity and excellence.ⁱ

—John B. King, *Senior Deputy Commissioner of Education*, 2011



INTRODUCTION

For six years, New York State has been committed as a matter of policy to predicting—early in a child's education—whether they will be college or career ready upon completion of high school. The adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and alignment of the NYS Grades 3–8 ELA and math assessments with CCSS was the cornerstone of this effort.

It hasn't worked.

In 2012, prior to the adoption of CCSS and assessment alignment, the tests projected that 50.2 percent of the 2012 8th grade class would graduate from high school college-ready. For students who were in 8th grade in 2014 and 2015, the projection was 21.5 percent and 21.9 percent, respectively. It is unlikely that 8th grade students in 2014 and 2015 are demonstrably different from their predecessors, who took the assessments prior to alignment with CCSS. For all three cohorts, a real-world measure of college-readiness, the percentage of entering students who do not require remediation, showed that approximately 50 percent of New York's high schoolers were prepared to succeed. This has been a consistent result for the past nine years.

Measurement is dependent on tools that give a useful result. A sprinter has no use for a broken stopwatch; a tailor needs a tape measure that is not torn. If the current NYS Grades 3–8 assessments cannot accurately measure college-readiness—their stated primary intention—we must ask: *what's the point?*

BACKGROUND: THE PROCESS OF DEFINING COLLEGE-READINESS AND PROFICIENCY

In 2007, 50 percent of first-year students at New York's two-year colleges and 11 percent of first-year students at four-year colleges took at least one remedial course.ⁱⁱ Concern about the number of high school graduates in New York State who were insufficiently prepared contributed to the creation of an education reform agenda aimed at reducing dropout rates, closing the racial achievement gap, and increasing the number of students who graduate from high school with the skills to succeed in college.

As a first step in their effort to increase the number of college-ready high school graduates and thus mitigate the need for remediation, the state Board of Regents, the policy makers for education, sought to measure

college-readiness by identifying predictors through the use of statewide standardized assessments (NYS 3–8 standardized tests and/or the Regents exams).

The Board of Regents began with an examination of the Regents assessments, already being administered. They specified two levels of achievement on these exams that would indicate college readiness:

- **The Aspirational Performance Measure (APM)** required a score of at least 80 on a math Regents exam and 75 on the Regents ELA exam.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **The Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation** required passage of 7–9 Regents exams with a score of 65 or above. (This designation also requires 22 units of course credit and advanced course sequences in Career and Technical Education, the arts, or a language other than English).^{iv}

At that time, the aspirational college-ready metrics were purely informational; they did not carry any consequences for students or districts and did not play a role in state accountability measures.^v The New York State Education Department (NYSED) explained that these metrics could be used to predict whether student *populations* were on track to succeed in college without remediation and cautioned against using these targets as predictors for *individual* students.^{vi} Yet, these aspirational measures indicated a large gap between Regents-defined college-readiness and graduation rates; 30.9 percent of the 2006 statewide cohort graduated with a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation and 36.7 percent hit the threshold of the Aspirational Performance Metric. These figures were compared to the statewide graduation rate of 73.4 percent.

Then, in 2010, NYSED began the work of integrating the concept of college-readiness into the annual standardized tests given to students in grades 3–8. As a first step, NYSED revised the cut scores—the actual score on the test that determined proficiency—on the

Grades 3–8 ELA and math assessments to align with the state’s proficiency rates of 4th and 8th graders on another test: the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). In that year, proficiency rates of NYS 3rd to 8th graders declined from 77 percent to 53 percent in ELA and from 86 percent to 61 percent in mathematics.^{vii}

However, alignment with NAEP scores is a questionable practice. The National Assessment Governing Board—overseers of the NAEP—is still in the process of researching the validity of the NAEP as a predictor of college- and career-readiness. Moreover, their pilot research on this topic uses 12th grade scores, not 4th and 8th grade scores. The Governing Board’s initial estimates of nationwide proficiency—39 percent in mathematics and 38 percent in reading—have only been reported on a provisional basis.^{viii}

Nevertheless, these NAEP-aligned cut scores were only an interim step toward measuring college-readiness at the elementary and middle school levels. The ultimate goal was to measure student progress toward the CCSS. NYSED believed that aligning the Grades 3–8 state assessments with the CCSS would provide more accurate “early indicators of the trajectory to college readiness long before our students enter high school.”^{ix} This meant that NYSED would have to determine the appropriate cut scores for the CCSS-aligned assessments. NYSED also wanted Grade 3–8 assessment outcomes to be more closely matched to two other measures of college-readiness: graduates scoring at the Aspirational Performance Measure level and results on the NAEP.^x

To find the right cut scores they turned to The College Board. NYSED asked The College Board to look at New York state student performance relative to the SAT and PSAT/NMSQT and answer the following questions:

- **For English Language Arts:** What score on the SAT (in Critical Reading and Writing) yields a 75 percent probability of attaining at least a grade of B- or its equivalent in those applicable courses?
- **For Math:** What score on the SAT in Math yields a 60% probability of attaining at least a grade of C+ or its equivalent in those applicable courses?^{xi}

Table 1. SAT benchmarks that determine proficiency on NYS grades 3–8 assessments and Regents exams

Test	Score	National Percentile
SAT Critical Reading	560	70
SAT Writing	530	65
SAT Math	540	58
COMPOSITE	1630	66

In answer to those questions The College Board returned these SAT benchmarks:

As shown in *Table 1*, NYSED aligned cut scores on the Grades 3–8 assessment with an SAT score of 1630 (attained by 34 percent of the students who take the SAT, itself a self-selected population). Interestingly, this benchmark is higher than The College Board’s own benchmark of college-readiness, which is a composite score of 1550.^{xii}

With the cut scores established, the new, CCSS-aligned Grade 3–8 NYS assessments were first administered in April, 2013. NYSED advised school districts that they should expect a decline in proficiency rates, but that the new scores would provide a more realistic view of the number of students on track for college success. In 2013, 31 percent of students in Grades 3–8 were deemed proficient in ELA; math proficiency was also 31 percent. In Grade 8, the students who were closer to graduation,

proficiency rates were 34 percent for ELA and 28 percent for math.^{xiii} These levels of achievement were NYSED’s predictors of college readiness for those then primary and secondary school students.

Relying solely on SAT benchmarks as a measure of proficiency for NYS students on the Grades 3–8 standardized assessments is a debatable choice. First, the composite score benchmark of 1630 is a level that only one-third of SAT test-takers (usually limited to college-bound students) achieved, nationwide.^{xiv} Second, the SAT is a normative-referenced test (scoring is based on the relative distribution of scores and used to rank test-takers), while the NYS Grades 3–8, assessments, remember, aligned with CCSS—should be criterion-referenced (scoring based on specific knowledge or skills—the learning standards in this case).

Moreover, even The College Board, creators of the SAT, advises college admissions officers to take high school performance into account when trying to predict collegiate success. “The best combination of predictors of FYGPA [*first year GPA in college*] is HSGPA [*high school GPA*] and SAT scores, and the College Board continues to encourage institutions to use both measures when making admissions decisions.”^{xv}

Finally, while the cut scores are set to assess the *probability* of achieving a certain outcome, the policy decisions made on the basis of the assessments—specially future NYS graduation requirements—are not conditional, they are definitive.

Figure 1: Summary of college-readiness indicators

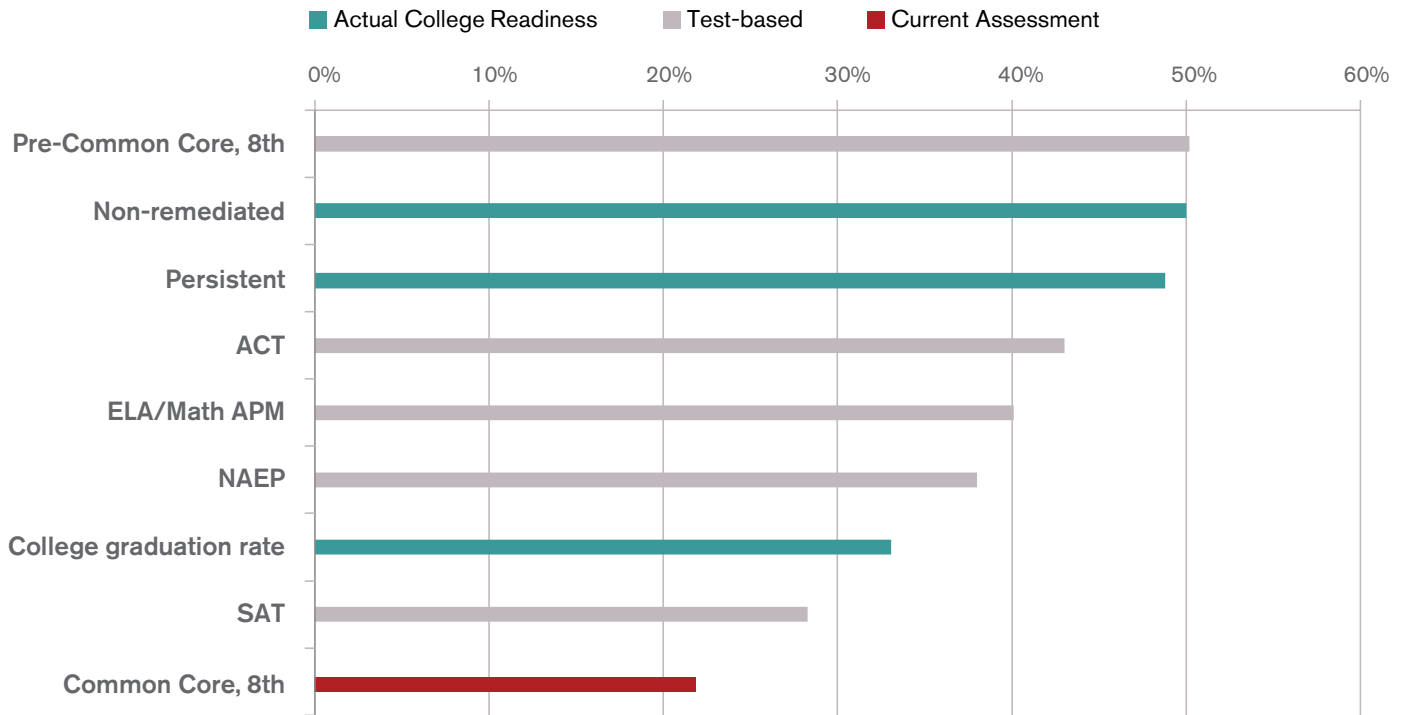


Table 2. Summary of college-readiness metrics, actual college-readiness indicators and test-based predictors

Type of Metric	Metric	College Readiness Rate
Actual college-readiness metrics	College-enrolled, non-remediated	50.0%
	College-enrolled, persistent	48.8%
	College-enrolled, graduated	33.1%
K-12 test-based metrics	Regents, Aspirational Performance Measure	40.1%
	NAEP	38.0%
	SAT	28.3%
	ACT	43.0%
	Pre-CCSS 8th grade assessments (2012)*	50.2%
	CCSS 8th grade assessments (2015)*	21.9%

*The minimum outcome of the two measures is used because we are interested in proficiency in both subjects, which would be analogous to requiring no remediation in any subject.

Table 3. Non-remediation, 2- and 4-year public and private colleges, 2007–2015

YEAR	All Students	4-yr College Bound	2-yr College Bound	4-yr Remediation Rate	2-year Remediation Rate	Combined Remediation Rate	Non-remediated Population (of college-bound students)	Non-remediated Rate
2007	210,234	85,626	49,203	11.2%	49.7%		100,785	47.9%
2008	218,779	87,232	53,928	11.5%	51.1%		103,571	47.3%
2009	223,447	86,885	59,009	11.4%	49.5%		106,780	47.8%
2010	225,394	88,224	61,685	10.1%	50.6%		109,786	48.7%
2011	223,234	86,386	60,554			26.8%	107,621	48.2%
2012	220,964	87,118	60,422			28.7%	105,204	47.6%
2013	215,979	87,220	58,569			26.7%	106,816	49.5%
2014	217,289	89,823	58,017			26.8%	108,280	49.8%
2015	210,682	87,764	56,040			26.8%	105,324	50.0%

Source: All Students = Completers + Noncompleters from New York State School Report Card data (<https://data.nysed.gov/>)

NOTES: Rates for 2012 and 2013 are only available for 2- and 4-year combined.^{xvii} When remediation data are not available for an individual year a blended rate of all years is utilized (these cases are italicized).

MEASURING UP: COLLEGE READINESS METRICS, ACTUAL AND TEST-BASED

To assess the accuracy with which NYS Grade 3–8 assessments measure college readiness, we compare results from those assessments to other metrics intended to predict or explicitly measure college readiness. These measures fall into two broad categories: actual post-secondary metrics, such as the rate of students who required remediation upon entrance to post-secondary education, and K–12 test-based metrics, such as the NAEP or the SAT. *Table 2* and *Figure 1* present a summary of the metrics used for this analysis; these are then followed by a more detailed discussion of each (*Tables 3–11*).

Table 2 and *Figure 1* illustrate the differences in outcomes among multiple indicators of college-readiness. The real-world metric that indicates the highest percentage of

college-ready graduates is non-remediation upon entry to a post-secondary institution; 50 percent of all high school students enroll in college and do not require remediation (and can thus be labeled college-ready). The metric that predicts the lowest percentage of college readiness is the NYS Grade 8 assessment administered in 2015 (and aligned with CCSS); it indicates that approximately 22 percent of students are ready for college. This large discrepancy between an actual metric and a test-based metric is striking, especially as the rates of college remediation were a driving force behind the Regents Reform Agenda.

Tables 3–11 explore each college readiness metric in greater detail; *Tables 3–5* focus on actual college readiness metrics and *Tables 6–11* focus on test-based metrics.

A. Actual college-readiness metrics

Post-secondary non-remediation

Table 3 shows non-remediation rates of students attending 2- and 4-year colleges (public and private) in NYS. Remediation is measured as students taking one or more non-credit bearing, remedial course in their initial year of college; non-remediation is used as the metric because students who do not require remediation in any subject are considered college-ready. The actual number of college-bound students, minus those requiring remediation, is compared to the total student population from that year to account for students who are not attending college and students not completing high school.^{xvi}

The percentage of students attending college and not requiring remediation is relatively consistent across this decade, averaging 48.5 percent.

College persistence

Table 4 offers another metric of actual college readiness: student persistence through the second year of college. This measure includes those students who are still enrolled in college during the fall after their initial year of enrollment. The actual number of college-bound students, minus those not persisting to their second year, is compared to the total student population from that year.

The percentage of students who persist through their first year of college and into a second year is relatively consistent at 50 percent over the past nine years. Again, using an actual measure of college-readiness (those who are successful enough to continue on to their second year), the data indicate that, across 2007–2015, approximately 47.5 percent of all students were college ready.^{xviii}

College Completion

Table 5 provides the most rigorous metric of college readiness: college graduation rates for students attending 2- and 4-year colleges.^{xix} The overall college completion

Table 4: College persistence to second year, remediated and non-remediated, 2007–2015

YEAR	All Students	Remediated Students	Non-remediated Students	Persistence Rate, Remediated Students	Persistence Rate, Non-remediated Students ^{xviii}	Total, Persistent Students	Persistence Rate
2007	210,234	34,044	100,785	58.5%	76.6%	97,090	46.2%
2008	218,779	37,589	103,571	58.5%	75.7%	100,420	45.9%
2009	223,447	39,114	106,780	58.9%	76.0%	104,188	46.6%
2010	225,394	40,123	109,786	59.3%	77.1%	108,447	48.1%
2011	223,234	39,319	107,621	58.5%	76.2%	105,051	47.1%
2012	220,964	42,336	105,204	58.5%	76.2%	104,974	47.5%
2013	215,979	38,973	106,816	58.5%	76.2%	104,235	48.3%
2014	217,289	39,560	108,280	58.5%	76.2%	105,695	48.6%
2015	210,682	38,480	105,324	58.5%	76.2%	102,809	48.8%

NOTE: When persistence data are not available for an individual year a blended rate of all years is utilized (these cases are italicized).

Table 5: College completion rate, 2- and 4-year public and private colleges, extended graduation rates

YEAR	All Students	4-yr College Bound	2-yr College Bound	6-yr Grad Rate (4-yr college)	3-yr Grad Rate (2-yr college)	4-yr, Total Grads	2-yr, Total Grads	College Completion Rate
2007	210,234	85,626	49,203	64.3%	22.3%	55,058	10,972	31.4%
2008	218,779	87,232	53,928	64.7%	23.3%	56,439	12,565	31.5%
2009	223,447	86,885	59,009	65.4%	22.3%	56,823	13,159	31.3%
2010	225,394	88,224	61,685	64.8%	22.4%	57,171	13,817	31.5%
2011	223,234	86,386	60,554	64.8%	22.6%	55,980	13,685	31.2%
2012	220,964	87,118	60,422	64.8%	24.2%	56,454	14,622	32.2%
2013	215,979	87,220	58,569	64.8%	22.8%	56,520	13,354	32.4%
2014	217,289	89,823	58,017	64.8%	22.8%	58,207	13,228	32.9%
2015	210,682	87,764	56,040	64.8%	22.8%	56,873	12,778	33.1%

NOTES: When graduation rate data are not available (i.e. too early to assess the cohort) for an individual year a blended rate of all years is utilized (these cases are italicized). The 3-yr Grad Rate does not account for the approx. 15% of associate degree students that remain enrolled after year 3.

Table 6: High school graduates scoring at the level of Aspirational Performance Measure, 2010–2015

YEAR	Cohort	ELA/Math APM	APM Rate ^{xxii}
2010	221,130	81,134	36.7%
2011	219,926	76,253	34.7%
2012	217,866	76,933	35.3%
2013	215,229	80,868	37.6%
2014	208,793	79,574	38.1%
2015	204,381	81,961	40.1%

rate from 2007–2015—which accounts for students who never entered college—averages to 32 percent.^{xx,xxi}

B. Test-based metrics, kindergarten through twelfth grade

Aspirational Performance Measure

As stated earlier, the Regents sought to identify an academic indicator of college readiness through the creation of the “Aspirational Performance Measure” (APM), in which students score at least 80 on a math Regents exam and 75 on the Regents ELA exam. *Table 6* shows the percentage of high school graduates who met these criteria in the cited years. According to this metric, 37 percent of high school graduates averaged from 2010–2015 were college ready.

Table 7: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); college readiness benchmark, 2013

YEAR	Mathematics Rate	Reading Rate	Minimum Rate*
2013	39%	38%	38%

*The minimum of the two measures is used because we are interested in proficiency in both subjects, which would be analogous to requiring no remediation in any subject.

National Assessment of Educational Progress

In 2013, the National Assessment Governance Board created a pilot program to identify a benchmark of college readiness for the 12th grade NAEP. Ultimately they established benchmarks at scores of 163 for mathematics and 302 for reading. *Table 7* shows that 38 percent of students were college ready, as measured by that benchmark.^{xxiii}

The NAEP college readiness benchmarks are only reported on a provisional basis, primarily because they

have yet to research the impact of non-cognitive and environmental factors on college readiness.

The College Board's SAT

The College Board has set its college-readiness benchmark at a composite score of 1550. *Table 8* shows the percentage of students scoring 1550 or higher on the SAT, applied to SAT test takers and then to the entire population.^{xxiv} This metric indicates that 28 percent of students, on average, are college ready.

ACT

The ACT has set college readiness benchmarks at 18 for English, 22 for Reading, and 22 for Mathematics.^{xxvi} *Table 9* shows the percentage of NYS high school graduates who are considered college ready using this metric.^{xxvii}

8th grade NYS ELA and math assessments, prior to alignment with Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Table 10 shows the percentage of students determined to be proficient against NYS standards prior to the

Table 8: Students scoring 1550 or higher on the SAT, SAT test takers and entire population

YEAR	All Students	4 Year	2 Year	Estimated Percentage ^{xxv} Scoring 1550 or Better	Rate on Whole Student Population
2007	210,234	85,626	49,203	41.9%	26.8%
2008	218,779	87,232	53,928	41.9%	27.0%
2009	223,447	86,885	59,009	41.9%	27.3%
2010	225,394	88,224	61,685	41.9%	27.8%
2011	223,234	86,386	60,554	41.9%	27.6%
2012	220,964	87,118	60,422	41.9%	27.9%
2013	215,979	87,220	58,569	42.0%	28.3%
2014	217,289	89,823	58,017	42.2%	28.7%
2015	210,682	87,764	56,040	41.4%	28.3%

Table 9: Students reaching college readiness benchmark in English, Reading, Math, ACT, 2007–2015

YEAR	All Students	College-bound Students	Percent reaching English Benchmark	Percent reaching Reading Benchmark	Percent reaching Math Benchmark ^{xxviii}	Minimum Percentage*	Rate
2010	225,394	149,909	80%	66%	66%	66%	43.9%
2011	223,234	146,940	80%	67%	68%	67%	44.1%
2012	220,964	147,540	80%	67%	67%	67%	44.7%
2013	215,979	145,789	80%	61%	68%	61%	41.2%
2014	217,289	147,840	79%	59%	67%	59%	40.1%
2015	210,682	143,804	79%	63%	66%	63%	43.0%

*The minimum of the three metrics is used because we are interested in proficiency in both subjects, which would be analogous to not requiring remediation in any subject in postsecondary education.

Table 10: Proficiency rates, math and ELA, 8th grade, 2007-2012 (prior to alignment with CCSS)^{xxix}

YEAR	Tested, ELA	Tested, math	Proficient, ELA	Proficient, math	ELA proficiency Rate	Math proficiency rate	Minimum Rate*
2007	212,962	214,752	121,871	126,631	57.2%	59.0%	57.2%
2008	209,146	210,589	117,457	147,252	56.2%	69.9%	56.2%
2009	207,409	209,215	142,118	167,810	68.5%	80.2%	68.5%
2010	204,148	206,417	104,164	113,161	51.0%	54.8%	51.0%
2011	201,371	203,239	94,535	121,751	46.9%	59.9%	46.9%
2012	199,190	200,721	99,998	122,998	50.2%	61.3%	50.2%

*The minimum of the two metrics is used because we are interested in proficiency in both subjects, which would be analogous to requiring no remediation in any subject.

Table 11: Proficiency rates, math and ELA, 8th grade, 2013–2015 (after alignment with Common Core State Standards)^{xxx}

YEAR	Tested, ELA	Tested, Math	Proficient, ELA	Proficient, Math	ELA Proficiency Rate	Math Proficiency Rate	Minimum Rate*
2013	197,655	198,215	66,872	54,558	33.8%	27.5%	27.5%
2014	190,426	146,951	65,160	31,646	34.2%	21.5%	21.5%
2015	150,150	112,055	52,137	24,517	34.7%	21.9%	21.9%

alignment of the assessments with CCLS. Data are for 8th grade students, as these students are closest to graduation. This metric predicts that 55 percent of students, on average, who were in 8th grade from 2007–2012, will be college ready by graduation.

8th grade NYS ELA and math assessments, after alignment with Common Core State Standards

Table 11 shows the percentage of students determined to be proficient against NYS standards after the alignment of the assessments with the CCSS. Data are for 8th grade students, as these students are closest to graduation. This metric predicts that 24 percent of students, on average, who were in 8th grade from 2013–2015, will be college ready upon graduation.

Overall, there is great variation among the metrics used to gauge college-readiness. While actual college-readiness metrics suggest that approximately 50 percent of high school students are college-ready upon graduation, most test-based metrics predict the percentage at less than 40. One notable exception is the NYS 8th grade assessment prior to alignment with CCSS, which comes fairly close to approximating the actual college-readiness metric of non-remediation (approximately 50 percent for each metric). Most striking, however, is the misalignment between the actual college-readiness metrics and the current NYS Grades 3-8 ELA and math assessments (CCSS-aligned). Proficiency rates for these exams suggest a much lower rate of college readiness (24.2%) than an actual, real-

world metric (non-remediation) has yielded for the past decade (48.5%). This misalignment has serious consequences for the students of New York State.

Before moving on, we must acknowledge several limitations of the data and analysis. First, we are unable to conduct a cohort analysis that links student outcomes on the primary variable of interest, the CCSS-aligned assessments, with actual post-secondary metrics. This is because the 8th grade students who first took these exams in 2013 have not yet reached graduation. However, given the consistency of the actual post-secondary metric—non-remediation—at approximately 50 percent over the last nine years, we can be reasonably confident that this metric will hold in the future, if not improve. Second, the data about NYS remediation and persistence includes some youth who were not educated in NY (newcomers); approximately 20 percent of the sample falls into this category, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.^{xxxi} At the same time, some students who received their K–12 education in NYS subsequently left the state to attend college (leavers). We cannot separate newcomers in our analysis and therefore do not know the actual achievement levels of these students. Nevertheless, we assume that the achievement levels of the newcomers and that of the leavers (those who receive K–12 education in NYS, but then leave the state for postsecondary education) likely fall along the same scale and will thus offset one another.

IMPLICATIONS

The comparison of test-based and actual metrics of college readiness demonstrates a misalignment between the two, particularly for the most recent NYS Grades 3–8 ELA and math assessments. The NYS Grades 3–8 ELA and math assessments are not accurate indicators of college readiness. Low proficiency scores from the first administration of CCLS-aligned NYS Grades 3–8 ELA and math assessments (2013) led to labeling 72.5 percent of 8th graders in that year (144,000 students) as not on track for college. Given that the college remediation rate has held fairly steady at 50 percent for the last decade, it is not likely that this group of students, who will be entering college in 2018, are markedly different from their older peers—despite a NYS assessment that states that they are.

To be clear, we certainly must address the fact that approximately 50 percent of all New York students do not graduate or graduate without being fully prepared for postsecondary education. This percentage is far too high. But the current NYS Grades 3–8 tests, as demonstrably poor indicators of their stated purpose, will not help us get to where we need to be.

Further, despite the recent moratorium on using NYS Grades 3–8 ELA and math assessment scores to evaluate students or teachers, there are still significant implications that stem from their misalignment with actual college-readiness metrics. First, these assessments are used to characterize the condition of education in NYS and are utilized as a decisive factor in determining which schools are “failing” and, thus, subject to receivership. Second, state- and local-decision makers are encouraged to use the assessment results on an advisory basis in the evaluation of teachers and principals, so the scores will still be calculated, retained, and made public.^{xxxii} This keeps open the possibility that educators will be assessed retroactively when the moratorium is lifted. Finally, New York’s public school students will continue to be subjected to lengthy examinations that are likely to incorrectly label them

as off-track for college readiness and provide little-to-no useful feedback to educators.

As we move forward, the stakes get even higher for students. The Class of 2022 will be required to pass CCSS-aligned Regents examinations at the “aspirational” level in order to graduate. The 2015 results on these new exams foretell a coming graduation crisis: 57 percent scored at the aspirational level on the ELA exam, 23 percent on Algebra I, and 24 percent on Geometry.^{xxxiii} If those rates hold, two-thirds or more of the Class of 2022 will not graduate from high school (compare to the Class of 2015 graduation rate of 78 percent). In terms of magnitude, this will mean an overnight loss of more than 90,000 high school graduates, of which 35,000 are fully prepared for college success, using the actual college-readiness metric of non-remediation.

CONCLUSION

By 2013, the NYSED had aspired to design the Grades 3–8 ELA and math assessments to “measure the knowledge and skills students need at each grade level to achieve college and career readiness.”^{xxxiv} But the lack of alignment between actual metrics of college-readiness and the most recent iteration of the NYS Grades 3–8 ELA and math assessments demonstrates that they are not serving their intended goal. Parents and educators have a right to expect such a consequential testing system to be rooted in extensive research with benchmarks that correspond to real-world, rather than purely theoretical, observations. Until this can be remedied, these assessments should not be used for any consequential purpose. Or, perhaps more appropriately, administration of the tests should cease entirely.

References

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- ii <http://eservices.nysed.gov/orisre/NYStotalParams.jsp>
- iii Research on the 2005 cohort of graduates indicated that a score of at least 80 on a math Regents exam and 75 on the Regents ELA exam was an indicator of future student success.
- iv <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20110614/GradRatesRelease-FINAL.2011.pdf>
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- xiv <http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/research/SAT-Percentile-Ranks-Composite-CR-M-W-2013.pdf>
- xv <http://research.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/publications/2012/7/researchreport-2008-5-validity-sat-predicting-first-year-college-grade-point-average.pdf>
- xvi <http://eservices.nysed.gov/orisre/NYStotalParams.jsp>
- xvii Personal communication, NYSED, February 18, 2016
- xviii <http://eservices.nysed.gov/orisre/NYStotalParams.jsp>
- xix This includes students who took extra time to graduate; 3 years for those attending a 2-year college and 6 years for those attending a 4-year college.
- xx <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/oris/gradrates/nys/Baccalaureate1stTime.htm>
- xxi <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/oris/gradrates/nys/assocNYS1stTime.htm>
- xxii <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/cohort/archive-grad.html>
- xxiii https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_g12_2013/#/preparedness
- xxiv **Previous years:** <https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/sat/sat-percentile-ranks-composite-crit-reading-math-writing-2014.pdf>; <http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/research/SAT-Percentile-Ranks-Composite-CR-M-W-2013.pdf>; <http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/research/SAT-Percentile-Ranks-Composite-CR-M-W-2012.pdf>
- NY, previous years:** https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/sat/NY_14_03_03_01.pdf; http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/research/2013/NY_13_03_03_01.pdf; http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/research/NY_12_03_03_01.pdf
- All, previous years:** <https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/sat/TotalGroup-2014.pdf>; <http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/research/2013/TotalGroup-2013.pdf>; <http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/research/TotalGroup-2012.pdf>
- xxx To simulate this figure against the entire population we compare the total college-bound population to the national percentile scoring 1550 or above. For example, in 2015 a score of 1550 was the 58th percentile, meaning 42% scored at or above that figure, modified to account for NY's slightly below average SAT score (2015 NY mean composite score of 1469 vs. national mean composite score of 1490). Scaled proportionately, the percentile scoring at or above 1550 in NY has been adjusted from 42% to 41.4%.
- xxxi <http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/Condition-of-College-and-Career-Readiness-Report-2015-United-States.pdf>
- xxxii http://forms.act.org/newsroom/data/2010/pdf/readiness/CCCR_NewYork.pdf
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- xxxiv <https://data.nysed.gov/downloads.php>
- xxxv <https://data.nysed.gov/>
- xxxvi https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_259.asp
- xxxvii <https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/1215p12a5.pdf>
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Michael O'Donnell is the Vice President of the New Paltz Central School District Board of Education and the Chair of the Board's Legislative Action Committee. His primary policy concerns are the misuse of academic performance data and the over-reliance on K-12 education as a driver of economic growth. He works professionally as a data executive and holds a B.S. in Natural Resource Policy and Management from Cornell University. Mr. O'Donnell resides in Gardiner, NY with his wife and two children.

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