




December 2010

To: District Superintendents  
Superintendents of Schools  
Administrators of Public, Charter, and Nonpublic Schools

From: David Abrams 

Subject: Regents Comprehensive Exam in English: Standards Revisitation Update

In June 1999, the Department implemented a new design for the Regents Comprehensive Examination in English (English Regents); it was administered in two, three-hour sessions over two days. The format created significant hardship for students. Superintendents and other administrators repeatedly requested that the State redesign the exam so that it could be administered in one, three-hour session. In February 2009, Department staff recommended to the EMSC Committee that we honor this request; the Board of Regents directed staff to redesign the exam and maintain a parallel level of rigor despite the loss of three hours of testing time. In November 2009, the Department released the new test specifications and informed the field that the new exam would be administered in January 2011.

After the exam's administration, the Department will conduct a Standards Revisitation Process. The Standards Revisitation Process will ensure that the Department maintains the rigor associated with the original English Regents from 1999.

### **Standards Revisitation Plan**

The revised exam will be based on the 2005 high school level English Language Arts Core Curriculum, Performance Indicators, and Key Ideas of listening, reading, and writing.

The new exam retains the following components from the old exam:

- Learning Standards, Key Ideas, & Performance Indicators
- One listening passage
- Critical Lens essay
- Paired literature passages
- Non-fiction reading materials

|                                      | Old Exam          | New Exam         |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Testing Time                         | Two days, 6 hours | One day, 3 hours |
| Number of multiple-choice items      | 26                | 25               |
| Number of essay questions            | 4                 | 1                |
| Number of constructed response items | 0                 | 2                |

## Assumptions

The Standards Revisitation Process is based on four assumptions:

1. **Maintaining rigor** — the expected rigor of the new cut scores on the exam should be comparable with the current cut scores.
2. **Alignment with the performance standards from Grades 3-8** — continue to maintain the alignment between the adjusted standards for ELA Grades 3-8 and the new English Regents.
3. **Readiness for the next educational level** —performance standards provide information about students' readiness for their next educational level.
4. **College readiness indicator**—colleges have indicated that a scale score of 75 denotes readiness to enroll in credit bearing English classes.

## Goals

There are three goals for the Standards Revisitation Process: 1) revisit the standards due to the new test format; 2) describe the framework for collecting evidence to support the interpretation of the cut scores; and 3) continue the process for collecting evidence to evaluate the scale score of 75 as an indicator of college readiness.

## Methodology

There are three stages for the Standards Revisitation Process: 1) Pre-Policy Measurement Review; 2) Performance Standards Revisitation; and 3) Post-Policy Measurement Review.

### Pre-Policy Measurement Review

The Pre-Policy Measurement Review is designed to obtain recommendations for the expected percentage of New York students who would be classified in each achievement

level: 0-64, 65-84, and 85-100. A committee, made up of members of statewide advisory groups to the Department, will be asked to consider five guiding questions:

1. Given the differences in the new format of the exam, what type of differences in the percentage of students at each level does the panel expect?
2. What percentage of students in each achievement level would the panel find acceptable on the newly formatted exam?
3. What consistency is expected between the data from the previous and new testing programs?
4. What type of consistency does the panel expect between ELA Grade 8 and the English Regents?
5. What consistency is expected between national data and New York results for the new English Regents compared with the previous English Regents?

Following review of these guiding questions, panelists will review trend data from multiple assessment programs:

1. New York State Grades 3 – 8 English Language Arts Tests, Spring 2010
2. Regents Comprehensive Examination In English, 2006-2010
3. National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) for New York & USA
4. PSAT, SAT, and AP English
5. Dr. Howard Everson's study of the relationship between English Regents scores and the probability of a student earning a course grade of C or above in Freshman English

### Standards Revisitation Process: Content Review/Instructional Impact

Content Review Committees will meet in Albany to revisit the performance standards. They will study the changes made to the test and evaluate whether the cut scores mapped to the new exam continue to support the interpretations regarding student achievement. The content experts, including college professors, will focus on consistency in content requirements for the cut scores across the previous and newly-formatted tests. They will evaluate the knowledge and skills measured, how they relate to the standards and Performance Level Descriptors, and advise whether to keep the original cuts mapped onto the new test or to move them. Panelists will also evaluate the skills and knowledge of the items around the scale score of 75 and discuss how this supports college readiness. As a final step, panelists will provide recommendations for subsequent data collection and analysis to support on-going research efforts regarding college readiness.

### Post-Policy Measurement Review

The Post-Policy Measurement Review Panel will meet after the completion of the Standards Revisitation Process. The same committee who participated in the Pre-Policy Measurement Review will participate in this activity. The purpose of the review panel is to review and integrate results from the Pre-Policy Measurement Review and the Standards Revisitation Process. Following the review, panelists will be asked to independently integrate results from both meetings and discuss their rationale. Discussions regarding the use of the scale score of 75 as an indicator of college readiness will also occur. Further ideas for collecting validation evidence supporting interpretations from the three cut scores (65, 75, and 85) will be discussed and summarized in the technical report of the standards revisitation.

At the conclusion of all activities, a final report will be compiled and submitted to the Commissioner and Senior Deputy Commissioner for their review. The Commissioner will make the final decision regarding the setting of the cut scores.