

## January Regents Exams will take place in 2012

Written by MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG  
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SCHOOLS Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott recently announced that they have secured \$1.5 million in private funding that will allow students across the state to take the New York State Education Department Regents Exams in January 2012.

Previously, the New York State Education Department said that it would not offer the January exams for high school students beginning in 2012, after the Board of Regents voted to eliminate them due to budget cuts.

For thousands of our students, taking the Regents Exams in January will mean the difference between graduating and not graduating.

When the state announced it didn't have the money for the January exams, I knew we had to do something, or we would be letting our kids down.

I've always believed that you can either complain about your problems or do something to fix them — in New York City, we choose the latter.

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“Thousands of high-school students rely on the January Regents Exams to graduate on time and move on to college and careers,” said Chancellor Walcott.

“These generous donations give these students the opportunity for an uninterrupted transition to a successful future. We will continue to work with the state legislature and the State Education Department to find a long-term solution so that our students, especially the most vulnerable, have the best chance to succeed.”

In June, NYSED announced that, due to state budget cuts, they would no longer administer the January Regents Exams.

Nearly 2,400 of the 3,454 students who graduated in New York City between January and March of 2011 relied on the January exams to earn their diplomas.

Of these students, approximately 80 percent were black and Hispanic, higher than their representation in New York City’s student population.

In addition, the January test-takers represent some of the city’s most vulnerable populations, including students who have returned to school after dropping out, students with disabilities, English language learners and overage and under-credited students.

Schools have already set their students’ plans for the upcoming year, and changes would be difficult now.

They would be forced to engage students for another full term, risking having students close to completion drop out.

After fund-raising efforts, six New Yorkers each made donations of \$250,000, for a total of \$1.5

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million, which was accepted by the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City and the Fund for Public Schools.

In June, I announced that the four-year graduation rate for New York City public schools rose to a new all-time high of 65.1 percent in 2010, according to the State Education Department.

All ethnic groups saw gains last year, with black and Hispanic students — who make up roughly 70 percent of the school system — continuing to narrow the achievement gap with their white and Asian counterparts.

The graduation rate reached 60.6 percent for black students and 58.2 percent for Hispanic students, both increases of more than 20 points since 2005.

Across all ethnic groups, more students also earned Regents and Advanced Regents diplomas — crucial measures of college readiness, and increasingly important, as the city now holds schools accountable for how well they prepare students for life after high school.