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55 WILL REMAIN PASSING GRADE ON REGENTS TEST AT LOCAL OPTION

(Albany, NY) The state Board of Regents Wednesday temporarily extended a 55 percent passing grade at local schools' option for state Regents examinations required for graduation from high school.

State education officials estimate that 15 to 20 thousand students who score between 55 and 64 percent would graduate under the new, temporary extension.

State Education Commissioner Richard Mills says the action isn't a retreat from higher academic standards or from the use of standardized tests to gauge student achievement.

Ann Cook is from the New York Performance Standards Consortium, which opposes standardized tests. Cook says the recommendation camouflages the real problem, which she says are the tests' flaws.

The decision will be reviewed before the fall of 2005 to see if the 55 grade remains or is increased to 65, as the state Board of Regents has long planned to do.

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