



The Post-Standard

Group opposes Regents test rule

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By Paul Riede

Opponents of the state's tougher high school graduation requirements created an organization Monday and vowed to try to overturn the system.

Jane Hirschmann, an organizer of the group, Time Out From Testing, said the requirement that students pass five Regents exams to graduate is ruining the state's education system. She said it unfairly denies diplomas to many students and focuses far too much class time on test preparation at the expense of art, music and other subjects.

"How can our children's future depend on these flawed tests?" she said. "We might as well send our kids to Kaplan and Princeton review classes rather than send them to school."

Hirschmann, chair of the New York City-based Parents' Coalition to End High-Stakes Testing, said the new organization will unite like-minded groups across the state to seek a legislative solution to what she says is Commissioner Richard Mills' intransigence on the issue.

The announcement of the new group was timed to lead into the first of a series of legislative hearings on the standards. The first hearing, by the Senate Standing Committee on Education, is today in New York City. Hearings also are planned Oct. 8 and 23 in Rochester.

The organization released statistics Monday that it said showed that 44 percent of Syracuse school district students in the Class of 2004 will have their diplomas withheld because they haven't passed one or more Regents exams. The group's numbers for other cities ranged from 51 percent in Albany to 39 percent in New York City.

The Education Department says that statewide, 1.1 percent of last year's high school seniors failed the graduation requirement in English because the students scored below 55 on the English Regents exam. This year, the passing score is scheduled to increase to 65, and another 7.7 percent of students statewide could be in jeopardy, according to

Education Department numbers.

In Syracuse and other big cities, the numbers could be considerably higher but would not approach the numbers projected by Time Out From Testing, said Alan Ray, speaking for the state Education Department. "I think they just looked at a part of the picture and made a projection," he said of the group.

The Regents are reviewing whether to stick with their plan to raise the required score from 55 to 65 on the English, U.S. history and global history Regents exams this year.

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