



Graduation Without Testing

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The problem with all government activity is the difficulty of establishing accountability.

“As colleges across the country are reinstating standardized tests,” [writes](#) Meagan O’Rourke at *Reason*, “New York [government] high schools are taking another approach: eliminating the state’s longstanding Regents exam requirements.”

Thankfully, the tests are not to be completely junked: “This week, the New York Board of Regents, which oversees the state’s public schools, voted to make the standardized exams optional going forward. They are currently required for most high schoolers to graduate,” explains Ms. O’Rourke.

They want the exams to be “opt-in.”

While we’ve grown used to public school educators fiddling with grades, exams like those currently required — even if far from perfect — constitute an even better way to glean how well (or badly) teachers and students are doing.

Government schools suffer, of course, from “increased spending and mediocre results,” as *Reason* puts it. (I covered Michigan’s problems [yesterday](#), for example.) The avoidance of “metrics” — in business lingo — is just the kind of evasion that one might expect from under-performing institutions. New York’s opt-in downgrade is comparable to a failing student doctoring his report card or forging a parent’s signature.

But what do they really hope to accomplish? *The New York Times* [quotes](#) officials admitting they are trying to “eliminate barriers to graduation for some students.”

Ignorance and lack of skills are the barriers educators should be seeking to remove.

Through teaching stuff like math, reading, and science. And inculcating basic skills.

Graduation “magically” follows.

It is interesting — in a bad way — that education bureaucrats think their job is, instead, merely pushing the biggest number of students through the system.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.