



STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER

October 9, 2025

Melissa Aviles-Ramos
Chancellor
New York City Public Schools
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: College Readiness
Report 2025-F-12

Dear Chancellor Aviles-Ramos:

Pursuant to the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article V, Section 1 of the State Constitution and Article III of the General Municipal Law, we have followed up on the actions taken by officials of New York City Public Schools (formerly the New York City Department of Education) to implement the recommendations contained in our initial audit report, *College Readiness* (Report [2021-N-1](#)).

Background, Scope, and Objective

According to the U.S. Department of Education, three-quarters of the fastest-growing occupations require education beyond a high school diploma—a college degree or advanced certificate represents entry to rewarding careers. However, nearly half of all students who complete high school and go to college require remedial courses and nearly half never graduate.

New York City Public Schools (NYCPS)—the nation's largest school system, comprising 32 school districts—served approximately 900,000 students at its more than 1,500 elementary, middle, and high schools (excludes charter schools/students) in the 2023–24 school year. Over the past several years, NYCPS has reported increases in the percentage of students graduating from its high schools, yet the percentage of students whom it has determined to be college ready has continuously lagged. For example, in 2019, while NYCPS reported 77% of high school students citywide graduated, only 57% were considered college ready. In 2024, 83% of high school students citywide graduated while only 52% were considered college ready.

There are a number of definitions of college readiness. In general, college readiness refers to the set of skills, behaviors, and knowledge a high school student should have before enrollment in their first year of college as well as the ability for high school students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to successfully complete freshman-level college coursework. At the core of the different definitions of college readiness are assessments of students' proficiency levels in English (reading and writing) and Math. Being college ready helps students be better prepared for the post-secondary pathway they pursue after graduating high school.

NYCPS has developed its own definition for college readiness—a student who: (1) can successfully meet NYCPS’ criteria for graduation from high school and obtain the highest possible diploma/credential; (2) can make an informed decision about immediate next steps after high school; (3) is able to enter a post-secondary pathway without the need for remedial instruction/training; and (4) persists through a post-secondary pathway that leads to a degree, credential, and/or employment providing family-sustaining wages. Subsequent to our initial audit, NYCPS added a high school Grade Point Average (GPA) component to its definition of college readiness.

Along with NYCPS’ definition of a college-ready student, NYCPS established a “college readiness metric.” The purpose of the college readiness metric is to ensure that every student will be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to graduate high school and successfully pursue a rigorous post-secondary pathway that meets their interests and needs. This may include going to college and getting a degree, learning a trade and receiving certification, and/or gaining employment that provides family-sustaining wages. In 2024, NYCPS revised its college readiness metric to include a career component: the College and Career Readiness (CCR) metric. The CCR, along with other information about the quality of individual high schools, is displayed on NYCPS’ website and shows the percentage of students (citywide and at specific high schools) who met NYCPS student achievement measures.

The objective of our initial audit, issued on October 4, 2022, was to determine whether NYCPS was adequately preparing students for post-secondary institutions. Our audit covered the period from September 2015 through March 2022 and included students who were expected to graduate high school by August 2019. Overall, we found NYCPS should do more to prepare students to be college ready regardless of the post-secondary pathway they decide to take (e.g., enroll in college, get a job, pursue a trade, enlist in the military), and this preparation should begin much earlier in students’ school years. Specifically, for the cohort of 71,210 high school students expected to graduate by August 2019, as many as 23% did not graduate on time. Further, we found 38% of the students in this cohort did not continue or persist in college for 6 months after enrolling. Additionally, for a sample of 291 students from this cohort, we determined that 45% were not college ready. Furthermore, our review of the 3rd- through 8th-grade assessments for these 291 students found that students experienced a significant drop in proficiency in both English and Math between elementary school and middle school. In addition, for the students in our sample who graduated from high school, 38 did not meet all the minimum scores required to earn the diploma they received.

The objective of our follow-up was to assess the extent of implementation, as of September 5, 2025, of the four recommendations included in our initial audit report.

Summary Conclusions and Status of Audit Recommendations

NYCPS officials have made significant progress in addressing the problems we identified in the initial audit report. Of the initial report’s four audit recommendations, all four recommendations have been implemented.

Follow-Up Observations

Recommendation 1

Assess and provide support to school districts with a high percentage of students who did not graduate or persist in college.

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – NYCPS officials provided evidence they assessed and provided support to schools with a high percentage of students who did not graduate or persist in college. In the 2022–23 school year, NYCPS launched the “FutureReadyNYC” (FRNYC) program wherein they selected 135 schools and connected those schools with City University of New York colleges to help the students persist in college by including college visits, taking college credit-bearing courses, and taking career-connected learnings. In addition to FRNYC, NYCPS officials initiated a Career Readiness and Modern Youth Apprenticeship program to provide students with opportunities to earn credit and work experience.

Recommendation 2

Evaluate the reasons behind the significant number of students who were assessed as not college ready, and use the information to assist students and schools in improving proficiency levels.

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – NYCPS officials provided evidence they evaluated the reasons students were not college ready, including students who were found to lack early college credits and effective career and college advising. In addition to the FRNYC program, in 2022, NYCPS developed the Career Navigation Roadmap designed to provide guidance by grade level in high school to improve proficiency levels such as remediation for Math and English Language Arts (ELA), personalized advising, and planning for academic requirements for college courses.

Recommendation 3

Develop a system to analyze annual State assessment test results as early as elementary and middle school to identify students who may need additional help to become college ready.

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – NYCPS officials demonstrated they have a system in place to analyze annual State assessment test results for grades 3–8 by conducting an item skills analysis, which analyzes students’ answers to each question on the ELA and Math exams to identify weaknesses, strengths, and areas where additional instruction and assistance are needed. We reviewed the item skills analysis and initial June instructional reports and found these reports contained analysis of students’ performance on the State test by content areas and standards. In addition, test results for grades 3–8 Math and ELA are included in Insight tools, a NYCPS web-based tool that gives schools access to student academic data to help them identify elementary and middle school students who may need additional help to become college ready. Further, in the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years, NYCPS launched NYC Reads and NYC Solves initiatives to help improve students’ reading and math skills.

Recommendation 4

Develop and implement controls to ensure students are awarded the appropriate type of diploma.

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – The NYCPS high school academic policy guide outlines the specific academic criteria for each diploma type that students must meet to obtain a high school diploma. In the 2024–25 school year, NYCPS provided 535 school principals with academic policy training, which included certification and graduation requirements. In addition, NYCPS officials provided support to show they have a control in place that flags students who do not meet the course credit or/and exam requirements to graduate from school with the correct type of diploma (e.g., local, Regents, Advanced Regents). School principals also have access to Insight tools to assess students' progress toward completing the requirements for a diploma.

Major contributors to this report were Rita Verma-Kumar, Jasbinder Singh, and Ian Cunningham.

We thank the management and staff of NYCPS for the courtesies and cooperation extended to our auditors during this follow-up.

Sincerely,

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Audit Manager

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