



NYSSMA

New York State School Music Association

January 21, 2026 Review of the
New York State Education Department Portrait of a Graduate

- What We Know
- What We Do Not Know
- What You Can Do Now

NYSSMA Believes:

The New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) believes that every student has the right to a well-rounded education that includes a comprehensive, sequential, and high-quality music program taught by an appropriately certified music teacher, enabling students to achieve mastery of the New York State Learning Standards for music. Music is an essential course of study from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, providing students with a unique opportunity to develop meaningful skills such as discipline and perseverance, time management, teamwork and collaboration, responsibility and accountability, listening and communication skills, focus and concentration, problem-solving and critical thinking, confidence and self-expression and leadership skills. These skills not only support musical growth but also transfer to academic achievement, career readiness, and personal development.

What We Know:

New York State Vision and Graduation Framework

- The Portrait of a Graduate is part of a broader New York State initiative to reimagine education and redesign graduation requirements.
- NY Inspires outlines four major components of this initiative:
 - *Adopt a New York State Portrait of a Graduate*
 - *Redefine credits and learning experiences*
 - *Sunset current diploma assessment requirements*
 - *Move to a single New York State high school diploma, with seals and micro-credentials*
- Implementation Timeline (*A cohort is a group of students entering grade 9 during the given year):

Cohort	Proposed Diploma Requirements
Cohort 2023 and prior	Current diploma requirements. Students will graduate with one of three diplomas (local, Regents, or Regents with advanced designation).
Cohort 2024, Cohort 2025, and Cohort 2026	Current credit requirements. Diploma assessment requirements proposed to sunset within four years (fall 2027). Students will continue to take Regents Exams but will not be required to pass the Regents Exams to earn a diploma. Students will graduate with the NYS high school diploma. Students may take Regents Exams to earn endorsements, including advanced designation.
Cohort 2027 and Cohort 2028	New credit requirement. No separate diploma assessment requirements. Students will graduate with the NYS high school diploma. In addition to their diploma, students may earn additional redefined seals and endorsements, including advanced designation.
Cohort 2029	New system. Students must demonstrate proficiency in both the high school learning standards and the Portrait of a Graduate. Students will graduate with the NYS high school diploma with optional seals and endorsements. The statewide transcript will be required for all students.

What We Know:

Graduation Credit Requirements and the Arts

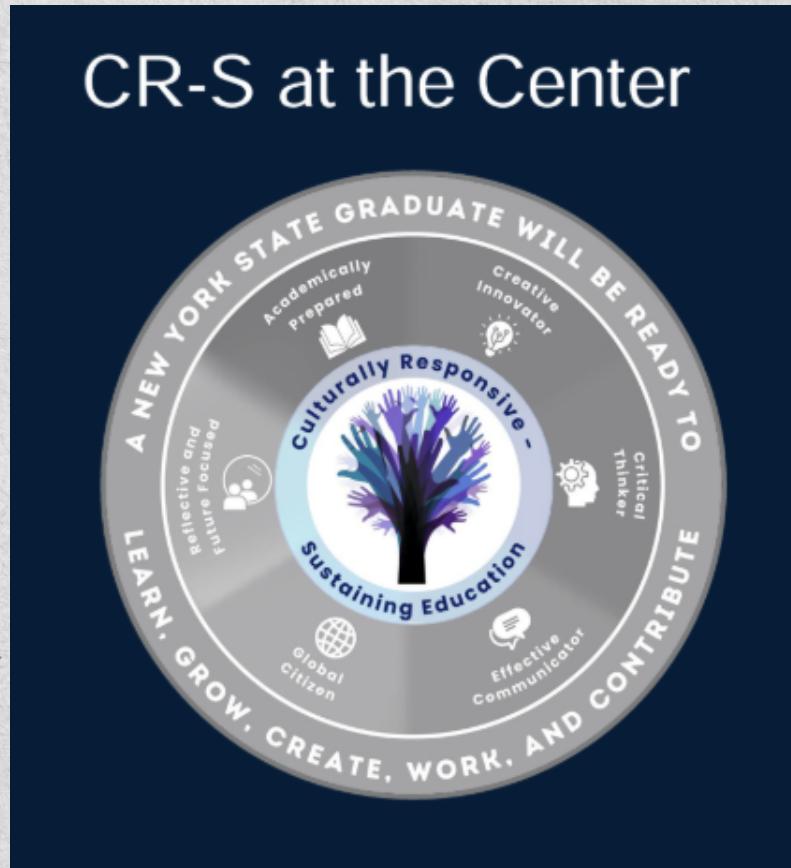
- The Blue Ribbon Commission has recommended that fine and performing arts be included as required credits for a New York State high school diploma (Credit & Program Requirements, p. 28).
- Diploma credit requirements must include:
 - *Civic responsibility (ethics)*
 - *Cultural competence*
 - *Financial literacy education (systems, personal finance, and social-historical context)*
 - *Fine and performing arts*
 - *Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)*
 - *Writing, including real-world writing skills*

What We Know:

Portrait of a Graduate: Core Attributes

- The New York State Portrait of a Graduate identifies six attributes of a culturally responsive student:
 - *Academically Prepared*
 - *A Creative Innovator*
 - *A Critical Thinker*
 - *An Effective Communicator*
 - *A Global Citizen*
 - *Reflective and Future-Focused*

Cultural Responsiveness serves as a foundation for the entire Portrait of a Graduate



- A New York State high school graduate who is **culturally responsive** builds strong, respectful relationships, valuing diverse perspectives as essential to a rigorous, inclusive learning community.
- New York State students who embody cultural responsiveness and academic readiness – demonstrating creativity, critical thinking, communication, reflection, and global awareness – will be prepared to learn, grow, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to society.
- These graduates will be equipped with the interpersonal and intellectual skills needed to thrive in an interconnected, ever-changing world.

* The Arts are in a position to be a unifying factor that is both central to its own content and a conduit toward the goal of all New York State students; being well-rounded citizens upon graduation.

What We Know:

Local Implementation and Program Design

- Districts will retain **broad local control** over program offerings and exit assessments.
- Districts will need to **link courses to Portrait of a Graduate attributes**, prompting the question: *How do music courses align with and support these attributes?*
- Schools may need to **adjust programs and instructional delivery methods** to support Portrait of a Graduate implementation, which may impact traditional course offerings.
- There are **new instructional requirements** which include personal financial literacy and climate education. Districts will need to determine how this subject matter will be integrated into current educational programs.
- Students entering **Grade 9 in the 2027-2028 school year and beyond** will be required to earn **at least one credit in Career and Technical Education** (CTE) to graduate.

What We Know:

Current Arts Standards and Diplomas

- The **New York State Learning Standards for the Arts remain unchanged** at this time.
- Students may still earn a **Regents diploma with advanced designation** by completing a **5-unit sequence** in the Arts (pending future NYSED revisions).
- Students can participate in the Individualized Arts Assessment Pathway (IAAP) in place of a Regents examination.

Additional NYSED guidance is expected to be released in Summer 2026

Frequently Asked Questions Related to the New York State Graduation Measures Initiative

Understand that this will be an evolving process and changes are bound to occur over time!

What We Do Not Know:

- Is NYSED moving away from traditional credit requirements based on seat time and hours toward a mastery-based system?
- Will Part 100 regulations be revised to change which credits are required for graduation and to what extent?
- Will students graduating in 2029 and beyond still be able to earn a Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation through the 5-unit sequence in the Arts, or will this option sunset?
- If the 5-unit Arts sequence is eliminated, how will this impact students' ability to take exploratory electives or courses they enjoy that are unrelated to a defined career pathway?
- How will the introduction of Pathways affect access to music education, and is there a risk that Pathways will further isolate students out of music programs?
- Does NYSED plan to establish approval criteria for Pathways, and which entity will be responsible for granting that approval?
- As NYSED shifts toward greater local control at the district level, will there be a statewide accountability system to ensure all students meet the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts, including music?
- How will NYSED ensure equitable access to music programs for students across all New York State school districts?
- What role will Pathways play in Career and Technical Education (CTE), and what types of courses will qualify for the required CTE credit?

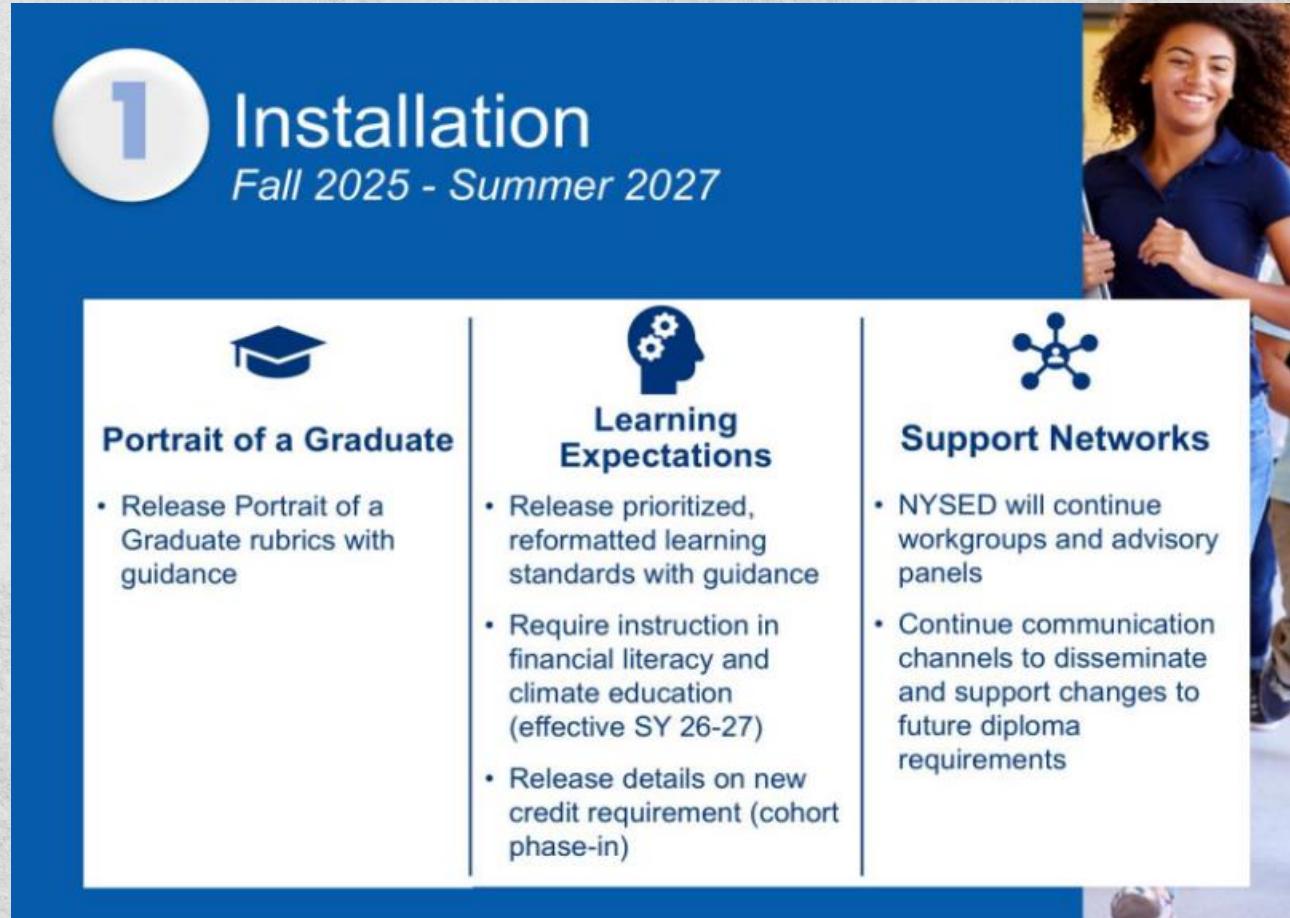
What Can We Do Now:

Music educators may begin reviewing the six Portrait of a Graduate attributes and start conversations with colleagues, district leaders and professional organizations in regard to how their subject matter will align.

- *Are there learning experiences you already give students now that align with the Portrait?*
- *What are those things that students do now that can demonstrate one or more of the attributes and how might you assess them?*
- *Identify where there are gaps.*
- *Consider the broader community, noting who has the potential to partner with your district to help students become the ideal New York State graduate.*
- *What is available on a regional basis? (i.e. BOCES)*

What Can We Do Now:

NYSED Presentation (*Valuable to begin here) - July 2025 NY Inspires: New York State Portrait of a Graduate



1 Installation
Fall 2025 - Summer 2027

Portrait of a Graduate  <ul style="list-style-type: none">Release Portrait of a Graduate rubrics with guidance	Learning Expectations  <ul style="list-style-type: none">Release prioritized, reformatted learning standards with guidanceRequire instruction in financial literacy and climate education (effective SY 26-27)Release details on new credit requirement (cohort phase-in)	Support Networks  <ul style="list-style-type: none">NYSED will continue workgroups and advisory panelsContinue communication channels to disseminate and support changes to future diploma requirements
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NYSED Presentation - January 2026 NY Inspires: A Plan to Transform Education in New York State

What Can We Do Now:

Remain knowledgeable of NYS Graduation Requirements

- *Graduation Requirements | New York State Education Department*
- *Graduation Measures | New York State Education Department*

Understand then Collaborate and Advocate!

What We Can Do Now:

Example of a Course-Tagging Chart: Music Education & NYS Portrait of a Graduate

Portrait of a Graduate Attribute	How Music Education Addresses the Attribute	Examples of Music Course Evidence / Artifacts	Applicable Music Courses
Academically Prepared	Students apply discipline-specific knowledge including music literacy, theory, historical context, and performance techniques. Music instruction develops analytical thinking, problem-solving, and executive functioning skills through sequential learning and authentic assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Music theory assessments• Performance evaluations using rubrics• Written reflections or program notes• Sight-reading exercises	General Music, Band, Orchestra, Chorus, Music Theory, AP Music Theory
Creative Innovator	Students engage in the creative process through composition, improvisation, arranging, and interpretive decision-making. Music courses encourage experimentation, revision, and originality within artistic constraints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Original compositions or arrangements• Improvisation recordings• Composition portfolios• Performance interpretations	General Music, Band, Orchestra, Chorus, Jazz Ensemble, Music Technology

Portrait of a Graduate Attribute	How Music Education Addresses the Attribute	Examples of Music Course Evidence / Artifacts	Applicable Music Courses
Critical Thinker	<p>Music students analyze repertoire, evaluate performances, and solve musical and technical challenges in real time. Ensemble participation requires students to apply feedback, adjust strategies, and make informed artistic decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehearsal reflection logs • Self- and peer-assessments • Performance critiques • Analysis of musical works 	<p>Band, Orchestra, Chorus, Chamber Ensembles, Music Theory</p>
Effective Communicator	<p>Students communicate ideas and emotions through performance and collaborative rehearsal. Music instruction builds listening, nonverbal communication, and ensemble skills, as well as written and verbal articulation of artistic intent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensemble performance recordings • Rehearsal discussions • Written critiques or reflections • Program notes 	<p>Band, Orchestra, Chorus, Musical Theatre, Chamber Ensembles</p>

Portrait of a Graduate Attribute	How Music Education Addresses the Attribute	Examples of Music Course Evidence / Artifacts	Applicable Music Courses
Global Citizen	<p>Music education explores diverse cultural traditions and historical contexts, fostering respect for multiple perspectives. Ensemble participation builds collaboration, responsibility, and civic engagement through shared artistic goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural repertoire studies • Concert programs reflecting diverse traditions • Community performances • Research on composers and cultures 	General Music, World Music, Band, Orchestra, Chorus
Reflective and Future-Focused	<p>Students set goals, monitor progress, respond to feedback, and reflect on performance outcomes. Music courses cultivate perseverance, leadership, and transferable career-ready skills applicable across disciplines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice logs • Goal-setting reflections • Performance growth tracking • Portfolio reviews 	All Music Courses
Cultural Responsiveness (Foundational)	<p>Music classrooms value student identity and voice through inclusive repertoire, student choice, and collaborative learning. Instruction builds respectful relationships and affirms diverse perspectives as essential to learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-selected repertoire • Inclusive programming • Collaborative ensemble norms • Reflection on cultural context 	All Music Courses

What We Can Do Now:

Additional Information:

- **Confronting New Obstacles in Music Education - New York State Council of Music Administrators of Music Education (NYSCAME), Michael Hershkowitz, Director of Fine and Performing Arts, Islip Union Free School District**
- Questions and Some Answers – SAANYS - About the Plan to Transform Education in New York State - Fall 2025
- NY approves 'Portrait of a Graduate' as Regents exams are on the way out – Chalkbeat - <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2025/07/14/new-york-board-of-regents-exam-portrait-graduate-requirements/>
- Perspective | Portrait of a Graduate: Competencies seen in a music classroom – EdNC - <https://www.ednc.org/perspective-portrait-of-a-graduate-competencies-seen-in-a-music-classroom/>
- Is Music Education Really Important? - NYSSMA - <https://www.nyssma.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Presidents-Page-November-December-2025.pdf>
- Ahead of schedule, Regents adopt new academic expectations – NYSSBA - <https://www.nyssba.org/news/2025/07/18/on-board-online-july-21-2025/ahead-of-schedule-regents-adopt-new-academic-expectations/>
- NYS Graduation Requirements: Statewide Refresher 2025 - NYSACAC - <https://www.nysacac.org/assets/pdf/GradRqmtStatewideRefresher050625.pdf>
- Regents consider requiring personal finance instruction - NYSSBA - <https://www.nyssba.org/news/2025/11/21/on-board-online-november-24-2025/regents-consider-requiring-personal-finance-instruction/>
- NY is mandating climate education. Will the state also fund it? - Chalkbeat - <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2025/11/05/new-york-mandates-climate-education/>
- High school requirements in NY will look different in a few years. Here is what's changing - <https://www.wrvo.org/2025-07-16/high-school-requirements-in-ny-will-look-different-in-a-few-years-here-is-whats-changing>
- Reshaping Readiness: How New York and Other States are Redefining High School Graduation for the Modern Workforce | AASA - <https://www.aasa.org/resources/blog/reshaping-readiness-new-york-and-other-states-are-redefining-high-school-graduation-for-the-modern-workforce>

NYSSMA Portrait of a Graduate Ad Hoc Committee Participants:

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Michael Roller - Director of Fine Arts & Library, Webster Central School District

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Angelina Wasson - Music Department Chairperson, South Country Central School District

Lindsey Williams - Music Department Chairperson, Owego Apalachin Central School District

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