

NY won't pass up tests

■ **State will not join** fed project to assess students

■ **Common Core testing** the standard — for now

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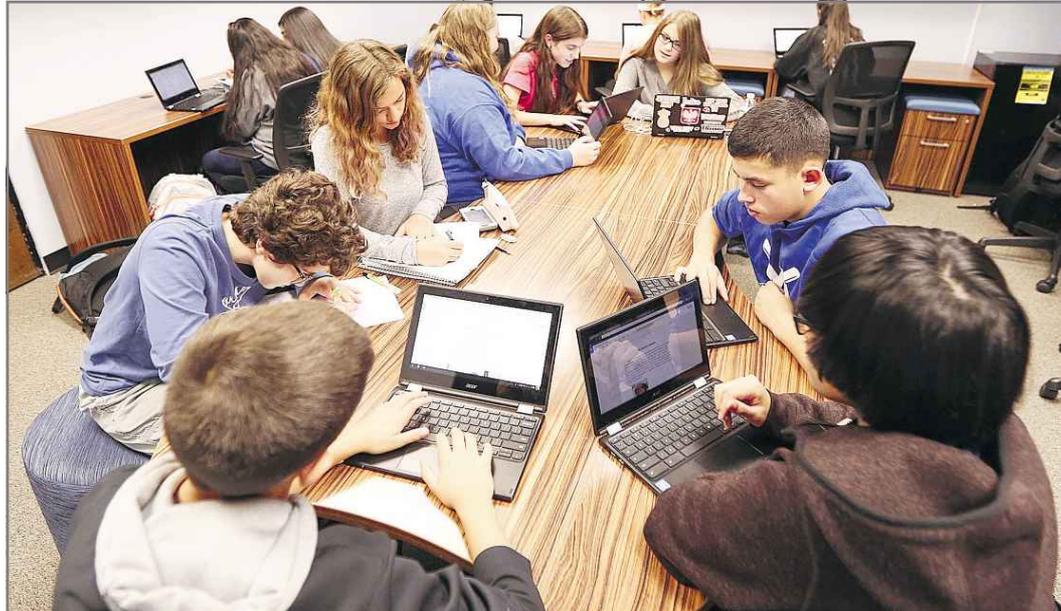
ALBANY — New York State will not join in a federal pilot project aimed at developing alternative ways of assessing students' knowledge without using traditional standardized tests, officials announced Tuesday.

The state's decision, termed a disappointment by some local school administrators, means that Albany — for the time being, at least — will continue relying on Common Core tests administered in grades three through eight and in high schools.

Such tests are highly controversial on Long Island, where approximately 50 percent of all eligible students in elementary and middle schools boycotted English and math exams last spring. Some local educators had voiced hope that use of alternative measures — for example, written portfolios — might help calm public discontent.

Tuesday's announcement was triggered, state authorities said, by the fact that the U.S. Education Department included no offers of financial assistance to states earlier this month when it released details of its alternative assessment program.

New York State's Education Department in recent years has struggled to fund its own extensive exam program. The agency actually stopped offering some tests — most notably, for high



Comsewogue High School ninth-graders work in a project-based learning workroom in November.

school foreign language courses.

Emily DeSantis, the department's spokeswoman, said the agency remains interested in alternative assessments, but added "the fact that there is no additional federal funding available to implement the pilot means the department must focus its resources on more immediate assessment priorities."

More than 40 consortium high schools in New York City already offer students a chance to complete projects, such as written essays, in lieu of taking state Regents exams in certain subjects. This is done under a long-standing state waiver.

In recent years, several suburban districts in Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester counties also have begun discussions or actual offerings of alterna-

tive tests, though they have continued using Regents exams as well.

The superintendent of one of those districts, Comsewogue, which serves Port Jefferson Station, took exception to Tuesday's state announcement.

"To dismiss this on the basis of money without a careful look is disappointing," schools chief Joseph Rella said.

Rella said that about 300 students in the ninth and 10th grades at the district's high school are using alternative measures of achievement such as verbal classroom presentations this year, in addition to preparing for Regents exams.

The schools chief added that a preliminary performance review of 50 students from last year showed that those using alternative measures scored "sig-

nificantly" higher on Regents exams than those using the exams alone.

Pilot projects in alternative assessment are authorized in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, which was signed into law in 2015.

Like earlier federal education laws, ESSA requires states to provide the same uniform tests in English and math to all student capable of academic work.

The new law makes an exception, however. Under this provision, the U.S. Education Department can authorize up to seven states to allow selected school districts to experiment with alternative measures.

Since 2016, New Hampshire has allowed students in some schools to demonstrate proficiency through projects rather than paper-and-pencil tests.

Damaged third rail, switch issues disrupt LIRR travel

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A damaged third rail caused the Hempstead Branch of the Long Island Rail Road to be suspended for nearly 90 minutes Tuesday morning, railroad officials said, and switch problems on the Long Beach Branch marred some evening trips home.

Shortly after 7 p.m. Tuesday,

the LIRR's Twitter said Long Beach Branch trains were 30 to 40 minutes late "due to switch trouble" at a yard there.

As many as five trains experienced delays ranging between 30 and 40 minutes after the problem surfaced at about 6 p.m., said Aaron Donovan, a spokesman. He added that a few trains were still behind schedule later in the evening due to congestion even though the switch problem was fixed by 7:15 p.m.

The morning suspension, in both directions, started just before 6 a.m. and service was fully restored by about 7:20 a.m. Five trains were canceled, the LIRR said.

Donovan said the damaged rail, which supplies electric power to trains, was near Country Life Press, a station in Garden City.

The station is in single-track territory, meaning that there was no way to provide alternate routing of trains to bypass

the area. The cause of the damaged rail, which was repaired, was not known.

The service interruptions occurred one day after LIRR President Patrick Nowakowski came under fire for his administration's handling of several major service disruptions during the past two months, acknowledging that during the period the commuter railroad had provided "terrible" service.

With Joan Gralla

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CORRECTIONS

Democrat DuWayne Gregory, presiding officer of the Suffolk County Legislature, lost to Rep. Peter King (R-Seaford) in 2016 by 24.2 percentage points. The margin was misstated in a column by Rick Brand that appeared Sunday.

The name of Nassau County Court Judge Robert Bogle was misspelled in a story Tuesday about a driver's guilty plea to vehicular manslaughter.

THIS DATE IN HISTORY

1848 James W. Marshall discovered a gold nugget at Sutter's Mill in northern California, a discovery that led to the gold rush of '49.

1908 The Boy Scouts movement began in England under the aegis of Robert Baden-Powell.

1942 The Roberts Commission placed much of the blame for America's lack of preparedness for Imperial Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on Rear Adm. Husband E. Kimmel and Lt. Gen. Walter C. Short, the Navy and Army commanders.

1943 President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill concluded a wartime conference in Casablanca, Morocco.

1975 The extremist group FALN bombed Fraunces Tavern in Manhattan, killing four people.

1989 Confessed serial killer Theodore Bundy was executed in Florida's electric chair.