



For Immediate Release
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More than a Statistic: Faces of the Local Diploma
A Call to Create Pathways to Graduation for All Students
New Briefing Paper Documents Need to Develop Alternative Pathways to
Earn a Regular High School Diploma

New York City. In New York State, 14.5% of graduating students in 2009 received a local diploma, rather than the more rigorous Regents diploma. But the State is phasing out the local diploma as an option. Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) today released a briefing paper, *More than a Statistic: Faces of the Local Diploma*, that profiles nine young adults who graduated with a local diploma and asks the State to reconsider its phase out plan until it develops a more comprehensive and inclusive set of pathways to graduation.

Disproportionate numbers of Blacks and Latinos, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities are leaving high school with the local diploma. In the briefing paper, the young adults explain how the local diploma opened doors for them that would otherwise have remained closed.

Meghan Healy, a local diploma graduate and an art teacher, says that if not for the local diploma, she “would not have had the opportunity to go to college.” She adds, “I would probably be an angry adult because I would not have had a chance to pursue my dreams.”

Ashley Washington worked hard to obtain a local diploma, staying in school after most of her peers had graduated. When asked what she would have done if a local diploma had not been available, she answered, “I do not know what would have happened.” Ashley recently began a vocational program in office and computer technology.

“Ultimately, we would like to see all students have a pathway to a Regents diploma,” commented Kim Sweet, AFC’s Executive Director, “but merely removing the option of the local diploma is not enough to move all students to the point of meeting the more demanding Regents diploma requirements. No matter what you think of the local diploma, it does in fact have value as a credential that makes opportunities available to the students who receive it.”

To download the full briefing paper please visit: www.advocatesforchildren.org.

For additional information, the following persons are available to talk to the press:

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Kariel Paul, Local Diploma Graduate
Ashley Mitchell, Local Diploma Graduate
Desirea Ribot, Local Diploma Graduate
Ashley Washington, Local Diploma Graduate

A number of the students profiled have agreed to be interviewed upon request to AFC.