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## Return to local diplomas endorsed

### School boards group asks N.Y. to reinstate non-Regents option

By Kim Breen  
*Democrat and Chronicle*

(October 29, 2002) — The New York State Association of School Boards will push a Fairport-based initiative to allow students to choose between a local and Regents diploma.

Delegates from more than 350 school boards voted on the resolution during the annual convention of the association Saturday in Syracuse.

Fifty-two percent voted in favor of the Fairport school district resolution, which amended one that had been proposed minutes before by the Levittown School District in Nassau County. It charges the association to seek legislation that would require the state Education Department to give school boards the power to award a local diploma. The standards for local diplomas would require Board of Regents approval.

The state has phased out local diplomas for most students who started ninth grade in 2001 or later. Instead, they must earn a Regents diploma to graduate. For most students, that requires passing five Regents examinations, although some districts have received permission to offer alternative tests.

Education Department spokesman Bill Hirschen said the department had no response to the resolution.

Jody Siegle, executive director of the Monroe County School Boards Association, said the Regents diploma resolutions generated the liveliest debate of all 23 proposed resolutions.

"Passing this position puts the State School Boards Association in a position



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that ... is in conflict with the state Department of Education." Still, she said, it often is not an easy task to translate association policy into legislative change.

Fairport school board member Kenneth Harris was pleased with the vote. "This has been a long journey," he said.

Fairport Schools Superintendent William Cala said he will continue to pursue developing an alternative diploma regardless of what action the Legislature takes.

His diploma, which is called the National Coalition Diploma, would give students the option to show what they know without taking standardized tests.

Cala has pushed for student competence to be judged by classroom performance, nationally normed tests and individual histories of academic performance.

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