



March 17, 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Beginning in two weeks, our elementary and middle school students will begin taking the paper-based version of the 3-8 NYS Assessments in ELA, Math and Science. Testing days are as follows:

- **Grades 3—8 English Language Arts: Tuesday, March 28—Thursday, March 30**
 - ELA make-ups: Friday, March 31—Wednesday, April 5
- **Grades 3—8 Math: Tuesday, May 2—Thursday, May 4**
 - Math make-ups: Friday, May 5—Wednesday, May 10
- **Grades 4 and 8 Science (Performance): Wednesday, May 24—Friday, June 2**
 - Science Performance make-ups: Must be given within the testing window.
- **Grades 4 and 8 Science (Written): Monday, June 5**
 - Science Written make-ups: Tuesday, June 6—Wednesday, June 7

These assessments are a valuable “academic checkup” for you and your child’s teacher, as they help pinpoint the concepts your child has mastered and which abilities your child is still developing. The tests measure important real-world skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, and writing, and require students to explain their answers and describe and defend their reasoning.

As you know, the NYS Education Department continues to take significant steps to address testing concerns expressed by parents, students, and teachers in an effort to encourage greater participation in the State assessments. The tests have **fewer questions** than before, are **untimed**, were developed with **greater teacher involvement**, and have **no official evaluation consequences** for educators. These changes were first introduced for the 2016 tests and will be carried over to the 2017 tests.

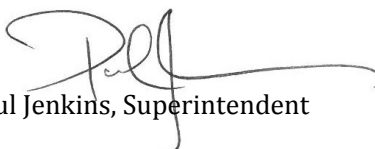
Educators from across the State went to Albany several times this past summer and fall to **review and select all passages and questions** on the 2017 ELA and Math tests to ensure they measure what students are learning in their classrooms. And beginning in 2018, the assessments will include questions *written* by New York State teachers.

Also, individual student **scores are not included on the student’s official transcript** or in the student’s permanent record, and are being provided to the student and parents simply for diagnostic purposes. This procedure is in effect through 2018.

We ask you to carefully consider the significant differences in this testing climate and protocol. If your child didn’t participate in the ELA or math tests last year—or might not this year—we respectfully urge you to consider supporting their participation in the state tests this spring.

The back of this letter contains additional information about this year’s tests from Engage NY, and I encourage you to read it over. If you have any questions about testing, please do not hesitate to contact your child’s principal or reach out to me directly. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,



Paul Jenkins, Superintendent



The 2017 Grades 3-8 New York State Assessments: What Parents Need to Know

Every spring, the Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Tests are administered to students across New York State. These annual tests are designed to measure how well students are mastering the learning standards that guide classroom instruction and help to ensure that students are on track to graduate from high school with the critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning skills needed for success in college and the modern workplace. The tests also show how schools and districts are progressing with the learning standards. Below you will find information about the 2017 tests.

Untimed Testing

- The 2017 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests will be untimed so students who need more time to demonstrate what they know and can do will be able to work at their own pace. The 2016 tests were also untimed.
- In general, this means that as long as students are working productively, they will have as much time as they need to complete their tests, within the confines of the regular school day.

Fewer Test Questions

- The number of test questions on the 2017 tests will be the same as the 2016 tests.
- Each of the 2016 Grades 3-8 ELA Tests had one less reading passage and fewer questions than tests from previous years. The 2016 Math Tests also had fewer questions.

Greater Teacher Involvement

- Hundreds of New York State educators were involved in creating and reviewing the 2017 assessments.
- Beginning in fall 2015 and going forward, a greater number of New York State teachers has been—and will continue to be—involved in the review of all test questions and construction of test forms.
- Teachers from across the State gathered in Albany throughout the summer and fall of 2016 to evaluate and select questions for the 2017 tests.
- For the first time ever, New York State teachers will write the test questions for the Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests. These questions will first be used on the 2018 tests.

Faster Results for Teachers and Improved Resources for Parents

- Like last year, the State Education Department plans to have instructional reports returned to teachers by the end of the school year and release at least 75-percent of the test questions.
- Also like last year, the 2017 Score Reports for parents will feature the updated clearer design and more information about what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. These will be ready over the summer.

Computer-Based Testing

- This spring, some districts will administer the 2017 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests on the computer. The computer-based test (CBT) will have the same questions as the paper version but students will take the test on a computer, tablet, or Chromebook. The State plans to have more districts use CBT next year.
- The State is helping districts transition to CBT. The long-term plan is to have all districts use CBT for annual state tests because CBT has the potential to make the assessments stronger instructional tools and will make it possible to get test results back sooner.