

# PEARL RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT

## GUIDE TO STUDENT ASSESSMENT



*“Every Pearl River student can and will learn.”*

**September 2017**

## PEARL RIVER SD – GUIDE TO STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### **Philosophy of Assessment**

In keeping with the Pearl River School District mission “*Every Pearl River student can and will learn,*” and the primary goal ‘*improving academic performance*’, the district recognizes the vital link between curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The careful, systematic analysis of multiple assessment measures coupled with strategic planning, both for individuals and cohorts, is essential in supporting continuous improvement. Accountability rests in the extent to which students meet clear academic standards on multiple measures.

Assessment is the act of evaluating, appraising, and/or estimating the features, qualities, performances and needs of individuals, programs, and institutions. *Educational assessment in the Pearl River School District shall embrace the following principles and values:*

1. The ultimate purpose of assessment is to support and enhance student learning.
2. Every student is a complex individual with a broad spectrum of abilities, skills, and knowledge.
3. Assessment shall focus on all key areas of student learning and development: core academics, intellectual ability, the arts, social responsibility, and physical fitness.
4. Assessment shall consider a wide range of relevant performance information, formal and informal, standardized and non-standardized.
5. Assessment shall be based on valid standards such as grade level expectations, appropriate reference groups (cohorts and norm groups), and individual aptitudes.
6. Assessment shall be systematically linked to analyses of teacher and school system performance and instructional improvement (data analysis).
7. Assessment data shall be communicated to students, parents, and community on a timely basis (individual and aggregate).
8. Information on how to understand and use assessment data shall be provided regularly to the educational community.

Reflected in this statement is the best thinking and practices of education professionals and educated community members, all of whom agree that to be meaningful and worthwhile assessment must be multi-dimensional and serve multiple purposes.

In order to understand how assessment informs instruction and improves learning and to help students approach assessment in healthy and productive ways, it is important to expand the definition of assessment well beyond that of traditional standardized testing. Toward that end this guidebook is intended to develop among educators, parents, community members and students, a shared understanding of the essentials of the Pearl River School District Assessment Program.

This resource includes a variety of information including: a description of the types, purposes and schedule of assessments regularly used to evaluate and report on student achievement; a primer on the terms needed to understand curriculum-based assessments, standardized test reports and student profiles; and test taking tips for students and parents. Information related to specific program and placement criteria is available in the school handbooks, brochures and program guidelines provided by schools at open houses, parent education seminars and as part of conference and planning meetings.

## **Overview of the Assessment Process**

Assessment, at its best, is embedded in the instructional process and is used to improve learning and instruction. As part of their daily classroom practice, teachers use a variety of methods designed to gauge student understanding of the curriculum. In addition to using periodic *summative* assessments such as end-of-unit tests, mid-terms, and finals, teachers also employ information from a variety of *formative* assessments, ranging from performance observation to quizzes, to make decisions related to individual, group and class needs. Both summative and formative assessments include spiraling core concepts to promote sustained learning over time. Standardized test data complements curriculum/course based assessments by providing perspective on how students perform in relation to local, state and national standards and norm comparative groups.

Learning to self-assess is not easy, especially given the importance accorded to evaluation from external sources. As such, student self-assessment is an increasingly important component of our instructional program. By helping students learn to set goals, assess personal progress, adjust and adapt, teachers and parents help them to develop self-efficacy and resiliency; two elements critical to independence and success.

Students with disabilities will be assessed in a manner outlined in their individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan. This includes accommodations that are indicated as necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the student on state and district wide assessments. Please note, testing accommodations that alter the measurement of a construct being tested are not permitted (as determined by NYSED) on elementary and intermediate level state assessments. For example, ELA assessments may not be read to students who may otherwise have a test-read accommodation.

Assessment data is regularly reviewed at the building and district level. This review includes, but is not limited to the compilation of an annual data book and board of education review, and quarterly review by the superintendent, deputy superintendent, building principal, and guidance counselors where appropriate.

We encourage parents and teachers to place test performance in the context of overall growth and to talk to children about the role that goals, effort, expectations and even failure, play in the development of overall personal success. Should you have a question about your child's performance on standardized tests or district or classroom assessments please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher, school counselor, school psychologist or administrator.

This Guidebook is intended as an additional resource to enhance school-home partnering in educational planning. It is one of many parent education and community communication tools that focus on curriculum, instruction and assessment. Please check our website frequently for additional resources: [www.pearlriver.org](http://www.pearlriver.org).

## **Standardized Testing: Overview**

Standardized tests are constructed to meet a set of standards that emphasize validity (does a test measure what it purports to measure) and reliability (are results stable over time). Test items are selected after being piloted for appropriateness and difficulty. Care must be taken to select, apply, interpret and utilize standardized tests in ways that are valid based on test construction purposes and psychometric principles. School psychologists are available to help parents and, as appropriate, students, understand test properties and results.

Standardized tests can be either **norm-referenced**, in that results are compared to a specific, “normative” group carefully defined by the test developers or **criterion-referenced**, whereby results are compared to a proficiency standard, usually defined by a content rubric or scoring guide.

**Normative tests** (ex. SAT) provide information about how a student performs relative to other students in the norming sample, usually using percentiles, quartiles or stanines (see scoring terms). **Criterion reference** (NYS assessments) tests provide information about how a student performs relative to content or performance standards defined by state frameworks or local curriculum

Teachers and parents are cautioned that, when analyzing the results of standardized tests, it is important to understand the concepts underlying test design. Terms like aptitude, ability and achievement are often used interchangeably as part of informal discussions; however, these constructs are distinct with respect to test design. Tests designed to assess aptitude are different from those designed to assess specific content skills or standards-based performance expectations.

It is also important to recognize that each assessment measures a ‘**snapshot**’ of student performance. Using a multiple measures approach the district looks for trends in student performance over time in making both individual and cohort instructional decisions. Evaluation of programs and curriculum that is based on standardized test results must be done with caution, especially when the test content and curriculum are not fully aligned.

## Standardized Testing Program

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Test</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Month</b> Administered/Scores Typically Available	<b>Assesses</b>	<b><u>Purposes</u></b>
<b>K</b>	<b>DIAL 4 Screening</b>	Norm Referenced	Kindergarten Registration – February/March	Verbal, Perceptual, Motor, Quantitative, Memory	Student placement, instructional planning
	<i>Renaissance Learning – STAR Early Literacy</i>	Norm Referenced	Fall, Winter, late Spring	Reading Comprehension and Mathematics	Instructional planning.
<b>Grade 1</b>	<i>Renaissance Learning – STAR Early Literacy</i>	Norm Referenced	Fall, Winter, late Spring	Reading Comprehension and Mathematics	Instructional planning.
<b>Grade 2</b>	<i>Renaissance Learning – STAR</i>	Norm Referenced	Fall, Winter, late Spring	Reading Comprehension and Mathematics	Instructional planning.
<b>Grade 3</b>	<i>Renaissance Learning – STAR</i>	Norm Referenced	Fall, Winter, late Spring	Reading Comprehension and Mathematics	Instructional planning.
	<b>NYSED – ELA</b>	Criterion Referenced	April/May	English Language Arts	Instructional planning, student services; curriculum, instruction, and assessment decision making; district/community/SED accountability; ESSA
	<b>NYSED – Mathematics</b>	Criterion Referenced	May	Mathematics	Instructional planning, student services; curriculum, instruction, and assessment decision making; district/community/SED accountability; ESSA
<b>Grade 4</b>	<i>Renaissance Learning – STAR</i>	Norm Referenced	Fall, Winter, late Spring	Reading Comprehension and Mathematics	Instructional planning.
	<b>NYSED Science</b>	Criterion Referenced	May/June	Science Content Understanding and Performance Application	Instructional planning, student services; curriculum, instruction, and assessment decision making; district/community/SED accountability; ESSA
	<b>NYSED – ELA</b>	Criterion Referenced	April/May	English Language Arts	See Above
	<b>NYSED – Mathematics</b>	Criterion Referenced	May	Mathematics	See Above
<b>Grade 5</b>	<i>Renaissance Learning – STAR</i>	Norm Referenced	Fall, Winter, late Spring	Reading Comprehension and Mathematics	Instructional planning.
	<b>NYSED – ELA</b>	Criterion Referenced	April/May	English Language Arts	See above.
	<b>NYSED – Mathematics</b>	Criterion Referenced	May	Mathematics	See above.
<b>Grade 6</b>	<i>Renaissance Learning – STAR</i>	Norm Referenced	Fall, Winter, late Spring	Reading Comprehension and Mathematics	Instructional planning.
	<b>NYSED – ELA</b>	Criterion Referenced	April/May	English Language Arts	See above.
	<b>NYSED – Mathematics</b>	Criterion Referenced	May	Mathematics	See above.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Test</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Month</b> Administered/Scores Typically Available	<b>Assesses</b>	<b><u>Purposes</u></b>
<b>Grade 7</b>	<b><i>Renaissance Learning – STAR</i></b>	Norm Referenced	Fall, Winter, late Spring	Reading Comprehension and Mathematics	Instructional planning.
	<b>NYSED – ELA</b>	Criterion Referenced	April/May	English Language Arts	Instructional planning, student services; curriculum, instruction, and assessment decision making; district/community/SED accountability; ESSA
	<b>NYSED – Mathematics</b>	Criterion Referenced	May	Mathematics	Instructional planning, student services; curriculum, instruction, and assessment decision making; district/community/SED accountability; ESSA
<b>Grade 8</b>	<b><i>Renaissance Learning – STAR</i></b>	Norm Referenced	Fall, Winter, late Spring	Reading Comprehension and Mathematics	Instructional planning.
	<b>NYSED – ELA</b>	Criterion Referenced	April/May	English Language Arts	See above.
	<b>NYSED – Mathematics</b>	Criterion Referenced	May	Mathematics	See above.
	<b><i>NYSED – Science</i></b>	Criterion Referenced	May/June	Science Content Understanding and Performance Application	Instructional planning, student services; curriculum, instruction, and assessment decision making; district/community/SED accountability; NCLB

**Note:** NYSED criterion referenced tests, grades 3-8, are designed to measure student performance aligned to the standards and core curriculum established at each level by the NYS Board of Regents. Student performance is reported across four levels:

**Level 4** – Students performing at this level **excel** in standards for their grade.

**Level 3** – Students performing at this level are **proficient** in standards for their grade.

**Level 2** – Students performing at this level are **partially proficient** in standards for their grade

**Level 1** – Students performing at this level are **well below proficient** in standards for their grade.

Grades 9-12	Test	Type	Month Administered/Scores Typically Available	Assesses	<u>Purposes</u>
REGENTS EXAMS		Criterion Referenced	June / with student report cards	Course specific core curriculum and NYS Learning Standards	Instructional planning, graduation/diploma requirements
ENGLISH	CC English (Grade 11)				Graduation Requirement
MATH	CC Algebra				Graduation Requirement
	CC Geometry				Graduation Requirement – Advanced Diploma
	CC Algebra 2 and Trigonometry				Graduation Requirement – Advanced Diploma
SCIENCE	Earth Science				Graduation Requirement – 1 science
	Living Environment				Graduation Requirement – Advanced Diploma – 1 life science, 1 physical science
	Chemistry				
SOCIAL STUDIES	Global History (10)				Graduation Requirement
	US History & Government (11)				Graduation Requirement

Grades	Test	Type	Month Administered/Scores Typically Available	Assesses	<u>Purposes</u>
9-12	<i>Renaissance Learning – STAR</i>	Norm Referenced	Fall, Winter, late Spring	Reading Comprehension	Instructional planning.
Grade 11	PSAT	Norm Referenced	October/December	Reading, Writing, Math (verbal, math reasoning)	SAT Prep; National Merit Qualifying Exam
Grades 11-12	SAT	Norm Referenced	Year Round Test Dates	Reading, Writing, Math	College Admissions
Grades 9-12	SAT – Subject Area	Norm Referenced	Year Round Test Dates	Subject Specific	College Admissions
	Advanced Placement (AP)	Norm Referenced	May / July	Subject Specific – taken in conjunction with advanced placement course	College Advanced Placement options at the discretion of college or university

**Note:** NYSED Comprehensive Regents Examinations are designed to measure student performance aligned to the learning standards and core curriculum established for each course by the NYS Board of Regents. Student performance is reported as a percentage, with 65% as the minimum passing score. In addition a score of 85% or better is considered mastery. College and career ready benchmarks: passing a mathematics Regents with a score of 80% or better and the English Regents with a score of 75% or better.

## **ESSA – Every Student Succeeds Act**

The Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) is federal legislation that establishes specific student performance and participation standards designed to ensure that all children demonstrate academic proficiency. ESSA requires all states to meet specific standards with respect to participation in annual assessments, student achievement and growth, and teacher qualifications.

ESSA requires:

- States to provide assurances that they have adopted “challenging” academic standards in mathematics, language arts, and science.
- Standards must be aligned to college and career/technical education standards.
- Standards must include no less than three levels of achievement.
- Standards must include English language proficiency standards that assess the proficiency levels of English learners.

ESSA assessment requirements include:

- In English language arts and mathematics, students must be tested annually in grades 3-8 and once in high school.
- In science, students must be tested once in elementary, middle and high school.
- Assessments must include multiple up-to-date measures of student academic achievement.
- Assessments must be aligned to the state’s “challenging academic standards.”
- Will annually assess the English proficiency of all English learners.
- Students with disabilities will be included in the state assessment system.
- States must assess the achievement of not less than 95% of all students.

The Pearl River School District standardized testing program detailed in section II has been designed to meet ESSA requirements as well as local needs. In order to ensure Pearl River School District students are prepared to demonstrate meeting and exceeding performance levels of achievement on the NYSED assessments, state common core learning standards and core curriculum requirements have been embedded into the district curricula and instructional practice. Specific annual assessment dates are available on the district calendar.

## **Glossary of Tests and Terms**

In order to assist readers, this booklet contains a section devoted to describing and defining tests and testing terms most commonly encountered by parents of school age students. New acronyms and terms emerge continually as the field of assessment evolves. If you encounter a term or test that is not included in this publication, please feel free to ask school staff for information.

## **Standardized Test Descriptions and Uses**

[ACT](#) – The ACT Assessment is a national college admission examination that consists of tests in English, reading, mathematics and science. ACT may be used in place of SAT I. Students should check with universities about preferences and guidance counselors about appropriate college admission test selections.

[Benchmark Assessments/Curriculum Assessments](#) – Teacher-designed assessments based on PRSD curricula that are administered to all students in a particular grade or course as means of evaluating student progress toward PRSD expectations. Scoring keys and anchor sets are developed to ensure consistency of evaluation. Rubrics and exemplars are often associated with these assessments.

[PSAT](#) – Tests verbal, math and writing skills. PSAT results are used in the college planning process and, for juniors, to qualify for National Merit Scholarship Program. Administration is in October.

[SAT \(Reasoning Tests\)](#) – Measures critical reading, mathematical reasoning abilities and writing skills. Results are used in the college planning process. Aggregated data is reported by class annually by College Board and State reports. Multiple administration dates are provided throughout the school year. Students should check with the guidance department at PRHS.

[SAT](#) – Subject tests that help colleges compare academic achievement of students from different schools where course preparation and academic backgrounds may vary. Test falls into five general areas: English, history and social studies, mathematics, sciences and languages. Students need to check with individual universities about requirements for specific topics. As with all exams related to college admissions or placement, information is available through the High School guidance department.

[NYSED Performance Assessments](#) - Grades 3-8- Standards-based assessments designed to measure student performance in meeting learning standards benchmarks and ESSA proficiency mandates. As such, these are criterion-referenced tests including multiple choice, constructed response, and extended response indicators. Student results are reported out along a four-point continuum with Level 3 designated as *proficient in the standards*. These assessments are designed to measure student performance in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies.

[NYSED Alternative Assessment](#) - The New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) is a part of the New York State Testing Program. It is a datafolio-style assessment in which students with severe cognitive disabilities demonstrate their performance toward achieving the New York State learning standards. Eligibility for participation in NYSAA is determined by the Committee on Special Education (CSE). Student performance is recorded through direct observation and documentation and may include other information such as student work products, photographs, audio and videotapes. Students must be assessed once a year beginning in the school year they become 9 years old through the school year they become 14 (grade equivalents 3-8). The secondary level NYSAA is administered during the school year they become 17-18 years of age (high school).

[NYSED – Regents Examinations](#) – End of course assessments designed to measure student performance aligned to the learning standards and core curriculum established for each course by the NYS Board of Regents. Student performance is reported as a percentage, with 65% as the minimum passing score. Students are required to pass a minimum of five Regents Examinations – English, mathematics, global history, US history and government, and science – to earn the standard NYS Regents diploma.

[NYSED – NYSESLAT](#) – The New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) continues New York State’s efforts to provide English Language Learners with a test that is consistent with the Common Core, the New Language Progressions, and current advances in the field of language assessment.

[Renaissance Learning – STAR Early Literacy, Reading, and Math](#) – Online, computer adaptive assessment measuring student achievement in early literacy/numeracy, reading comprehension, and mathematics. Student results are reported as a scale score and national percentile rank.

### **Common Assessment Vocabulary**

*Accountability* – Evidence that teachers, schools, districts and states are having a positive and substantial impact on student learning in meaningful, efficient and effective ways, usually illustrated by student success rates on various assessments and pre-established curriculum performance indicators. Examples of the accountability process include Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) and the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals established by NYSED as part of federal Every Student Succeeds Act – ESSA. Pearl River School District annually establishes goals, tracks progress and presents reports to the Board as part of our internal accountability process.

*Achievement Test* – Standardized tests that measure knowledge and skill acquired in core academic subjects found in most school districts’ curriculum and textbooks.

*Assessment* – The process of gauging knowledge, skill or performance using specific criteria. Assessment instruments include tests for achievement, competency, aptitude and performance, as well as other measures such as questionnaires, rubrics, surveys, essays, observations, portfolios, etc.

*Authentic assessments* – Require students to demonstrate understanding and mastery of content and skills by applying them in the solution of a real, context-based problem or situation.

*Aptitude Test* – Tests that are designed to assess a person’s ability to understand and perform in a specific area.

*Cohort* – A specific group that maintains the same members over time. Comparing performance of a pure cohort rather than a group whose membership differs over time, such as a class or grade of students, allows for more valid comparison of changes over time. NYSED tracks cohorts based on the year the student(s) entered grade 9.

*Criterion-Referenced Test* – Test that compares a student’s performance to a preset standard rather than to the performance of other students (e.g., scores can be interpreted to mean “Does she/he know it?” – not “Does she/he know it better than someone else?”).

*Constructed Response* – Test items that require students to write a short answer or complete a graphic organizer. Also referred to as *scaffolding questions*.

*Data warehousing* – Compiling and maintaining a variety of assessment and demographic records on an electronic database that allows for ease of access and analysis.

*DBQ – Document Based Question* – Key component of social studies assessments, requiring students to interpret primary and secondary source documents and write an extended response to a related prompt or question.

*Extended Response* – Test items that require students to write an extended answer, often combining information from two or more sources.

*Formative Assessment* – An activity that provides the teacher or student with feedback about how learning is progressing. This allows teachers or students themselves to get a “snap-shot in time” and to make decisions about how to adjust teaching or learning so as to improve or enhance performance.

*Norm-Referenced Test* – Tests such as CTP4 and SAT that compare the performance of the test-taker to the performance of a pre-selected “norm” group (i.e., a specifically defined group) whose performance on the test becomes the standard against which test companies compare other “like” test-takers performances.

*Performance-Based (Authentic) Assessments* – Assessments designed to have students demonstrate their understanding by applying their knowledge to a complex problem or situation, often resulting in more than one acceptable solution. Performance assessments focus on higher-order thinking skills. These assessments take on a variety of forms but are linked to performance expectations and rubrics.

*Rubric* – Specific descriptions or expectations of what a particular performance looks like at various levels of quality designed to help the student determine what she/he needs to accomplish to meet a specific score or grade. Often used as part of self-assessment and to provide students with informative or summative feedback.

*Selected Response* – Test items that supply an array of possible answers to a question from which a student must choose the correct or best response (ex. multiple choice, true/false, matching).

*Summative Assessments* – Assess accumulated knowledge and understanding at end of particular unit or course. Unit exams, mid-terms, finals, research projects and public performances and exhibitions are examples.

*Value-added Assessment* – Analysis of data that uses growth factors to study the question of the impact of teaching and other resources over the course of a set time for a specific student or cohort.

### **Scoring Terms**

*Mean* – A type of average indicating a central point in a group of scores. Test companies calculate mean by adding together a group of scores and dividing the sum by the number of scores. Often this may not be the best measurement if there are very high or low scores because these will affect the average of the majority.

*Median* – A type of average that identifies the middle of a group of scores; half the scores are above the median and half are below. The values of the scores do not affect the median.

*Normal Curve (Standard)* – A bell-shaped curve that represents the distribution of test scores. If the distribution is normal, most scores (68%) will fall within the hump of the curve ( $\pm 1$  standard deviation from the mean).

*Percentage Correct Score* – Score that shows the test-taker's performance as a percentage of the maximum score possible (e.g., if the maximum score is 50 and the student gets 30 answers correct the percentage correct score is 60 percent).

*Percentile Rank or Score* – A type of standard score reported on norm-referenced tests that indicates the percentage of people in the norm group who fell *below* the percentile rank of a particular test-taker (e.g., "this student scored at the 68<sup>th</sup> percentile – or higher than 68 percent of the students in the norm group").

*Performance Level (PL)* – Indication of student performance along a continuum (1-4) reflecting student progress in meeting NYS learning standards. These standards describe what students should know and be able to do each grade level and/or grade band.

*Raw Score* – The number of items a test-taker answers correctly on a norm-referenced test. It cannot be used to compare the student's performance on one subtest to his performance on another subtest.

*Scaled Score* – The Scaled Score is a technique for averaging scores where the degree of difficulty varies from one assignment to the next. Scaled scores are particularly useful for reporting changes over time.

*Standard Performance Index (SPI)* – The SPI estimates the number of questions a student would answer correctly if there were 100 questions per standard. The SPI is compared with a target range. A student scoring within the target range demonstrates the expected understanding of the standard.

*Stanine* – A standard score from 1 to 9. Stanines (abbreviated for standard nine) are based on nine equal divisions of the normal curve, with each score representing a band on the curve rather than a point. An average stanine score is 4, 5 or 6.

*Standards* – Statements of what students should know and be able to do, usually identified by grade level. “Content” standards cover the concepts, skills and processes students are expected to learn in various subject areas; “performance” standards specify what students are expected to do to demonstrate understanding or mastery of the standards.

*Standardized Test* – Tests constructed to meet validity and reliability standards so that the questions, conditions for administering, scoring procedures, and interpretations are consistent. There are two types of standardized test: criterion-referenced and norm-referenced.

## **School Level Assessments**

### **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS**

The elementary schools follow a quarterly reporting cycle. Students are assessed along a 4-point continuum:

Student consistently:

- 4 = Exceeds grade level standards
- 3 = Meets grade level standards
- 2 = Partially meets grade level standards
- 1 = Does not meet grade level standards
- NA = Not Assessed at this time

First quarter report cards are issued at a parent teacher conference, with subsequent conferences as needed.

K-4 literacy benchmark assessments include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Kindergarten – Teachers’ College Columbia Reading Benchmarks, STAR Early Literacy
- Grade 1 – Teachers’ College Columbia Reading Benchmarks, STAR Early Literacy Reading A-Z running records, reading response journals
- Grade 2 – Teachers’ College Columbia Reading Benchmarks, STAR Reading Reading sight word list(s), Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), writing response(s),
- Grade 3 – Teachers’ College Columbia Reading Benchmarks, STAR Reading ,QRI, ELA parallel performance tasks, NYSED ELA
- Grade 4 – Teachers’ College Columbia Reading Benchmarks, STAR Reading, quick writes, QRI, , writing response(s), NYSED ELA

K-4 mathematics benchmark assessments include, but are not limited to the following:

- Kindergarten – STAR Early Numeracy
- Grades 1 & 2 – Chapter tests and cumulative assessments, STAR Math
- Grades 3 & 4 – basic fact checkpoints, chapter tests, cumulative assessments, SED parallel tasks, NYSED Math, STAR Math

Assessment is closely aligned to curriculum and instruction. Please refer to the district website, [www.pearlriver.org](http://www.pearlriver.org), for detailed information about grade level curriculum and expectations.

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS**

The Middle School follows a quarterly reporting system with 5-week interim progress reports. Grades are reported numerically. Classroom assessment includes, but is not limited to the following:

- skills checkpoints
- end-of-unit assessments
- writing prompts/pieces
- SED parallel performance tasks – ELA, mathematics
- Performance tasks – science labs, music, art, physical education, technology
- Department mid-terms and final examinations

Assessment is closely aligned to curriculum and instruction. Please refer to the district website, [www.pearlriver.org](http://www.pearlriver.org), for detailed information about grade level curriculum and expectations.

The STAR reading comprehension and mathematics assessment is administered in the fall, winter, and late spring, and NYSED performance assessments in April/May. Data is used as described in the previous charts for individual planning and, as appropriate, placement decisions.

## **HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

The High School follows a quarterly reporting system with 5-week interim progress reports. Grades are reported numerically. Classroom assessment includes, but is not limited to the following:

- skills checkpoints
- end-of-unit assessments
- writing prompts/pieces
- SED parallel performance tasks – ELA, mathematics, social studies DBQ
- Performance tasks – science labs, music, art, physical education, technology
- Department mid-terms and final examinations

Assessment is closely aligned to curriculum and instruction. Please refer to the district website, [www.pearlriver.org](http://www.pearlriver.org), for detailed information about grade level curriculum and expectations.

The STAR reading comprehension and mathematics assessment is administered in the fall, winter, and late spring, and NYSED performance assessments in April/May to grade 8 students. Data is used as described in the previous charts for individual planning and, as appropriate, placement decisions.

The [\*PR High School Program of Studies\*](#) booklet details the minimum graduation requirements. Students are required to earn 22 credits and pass five Regents examinations in order to graduate. In addition, the Pearl River School District requires students to perform ten hours of community service for each of their four years in high school.

The Regents diploma is the standard NYS diploma recognizing completion the unit of study requirements and passing the following examinations with a minimal score of 65%: comprehensive English, mathematics, global history and geography, US history and government, and science. Students with disabilities may qualify for a safety net including completion of the unit of study requirements, and scoring between 55 and 64 on any of the five required Regents.

Students, who graduate with an advanced Regents diploma, must complete the required units of study and pass an additional three examinations with a minimal score of 65%. These include second and third level mathematics, an additional science (one life science, one physical science in total), and a world language 3<sup>rd</sup> year local exam. Alternatively to the world language, students may complete a five-unit sequence in music, art, or career and technical education.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Physical education is an integral part of the PRSD curriculum. Instruction is aligned to the learning standards and patterns of meaningful physical activity are encouraged to connect students' lives outside of school-based physical education. All students in grades K-12 have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.

Each year the current fitness level of our students is assessed through the *Presidential Physical Fitness Program*. This includes the following:

- *Curl-ups (or partial curl-ups)* – to measure abdominal strength/endurance by maximum number of curl-ups performed in one minute.
- *Shuttle Run* – to measure speed and agility.
- *Endurance Run/Walk* – to measure heart/lung endurance by fastest time to cover a one-mile distance.
- *Pull-ups or Right Angle Push-ups*- to measure upper body strength/endurance by maximum number of pull-ups or push-ups completed.
- *V-sit Reach* – to measure flexibility of lower back and hamstrings

For more information, visit [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org) or [www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov)

## **Test Preparation**

The best preparation for standardized tests is to participate fully in an appropriately challenging school program and to pursue a wide range of activities outside of school that include opportunities to practice, extend and enhance learning. Specific “test” taking tips and skills are embedded into classroom learning. Additional advice includes:

### **Ideas for Parents**

- Set realistic expectations for each child.
- Have children well rested.
- Communicate a positive attitude about your child’s readiness and the test: Be supportive and reassuring.
- Take care not to add undue stress by even unwittingly conveying anxiety about the “stakes” of the test.
- Provide healthy meals – the brain needs fuel.
- Help children relax: practice stress-reducing techniques with them (ex. deep breathing, exercise, visualization).
- Answer questions as honestly and openly as possible.
- Plan ahead to ensure your child arrives on time.
- Communicate with your child’s teacher about questions or concerns ahead of time. If your child indicates he/she had a problem during testing let the teacher know immediately.
- If your child is ill or there is an emergency and your child cannot attend the test, call the school to notify them of the issue.
- If your child misses a test help him/her take responsibility for making alternate plans with the school.

### **Web Sites for Test Preparation and Parent Education**

New York State Education Department (NYSED): [www.engageny.org](http://www.engageny.org)

College Admission:

Resources for Parents: <http://www.collegeboard.com/parents/>

Resources for Students: <http://www.collegeboard.com/?student>

Test Preparation:

[http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/prep\\_one/prep\\_one.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/prep_one/prep_one.html)

### Ideas for Students

- The best preparation is daily commitment to meaningful learning activities in and out of school. Reading a variety of materials and taking on new complex problems (games are great way to do this) are essential preparation tools.
- Regularly study materials and assess your own understanding. Cramming does not work, especially for tests that assess higher order thinking and cumulative achievement.
- Regularly get sufficient sleep. Get a good night's sleep the night before the test.
- Maintain a healthy diet. Eat a balanced, wholesome breakfast the day of the test.
- Dress comfortably.
- Plan ahead; leave early. Arrive on time!
- Have all necessary materials (pen, pencil, calculator, tissues, etc.). Organize them the night before so they are ready when you leave the house.
- Practice stress-reducing techniques that you can use prior to and during testing (deep breathing, visualizing, exercise).
- Listen to and read instructions carefully – make sure you understand them.
- If you have a question about directions be sure to *ASK* the teacher. Other students probably have the same questions and will be happy you took the lead!
- **Read all directions thoroughly before answering.** The most common errors have to do with responses that do not comply with the directions (ex. answer in fractions when decimals are called for; answer in fractions when rounding is called for; not providing written explanations of answers; not linking response to text).
- Make sure you are completing or “filling in” the answer sheet properly – make sure the question number and number on the answer sheet match – check throughout the test.
- First complete the questions that you feel sure you know – if you skip a question, make sure you skip the number on the answer sheet.
- If you are not sure of an answer, first try eliminating wrong answers (for multiple choice questions).
- Pace yourself and don't spend too much time on questions you don't know.
- Have extra pencils and erasers handy.
- Think positively and breathe deeply.
- Check answers and answer sheet at the end if time permits.
- If a problem or concern occurs during the test – such as an illness or significant distraction – be sure to let the teacher/proctor know immediately.

References: NCPS Student Assessment Guidebook, New Canaan, CT 2006  
Reeves, Doug. Standards, Assessment and Accountability. 2001