

Dear Families:

*With yearly exams coming up for all students in grades 3-8, here are some answers to frequently asked questions. These annual tests in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math tests are required by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, and are designed to provide important information about whether students are on track to graduate from high school with the critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning skills they need to succeed in college and the modern workplace.*

These tests are just one of several measures our schools use to assess student progress: grades, report cards, writing samples, projects, assignments, and other performance-based student work are equally important. While State test scores may be considered in decisions about grade promotion, they may not be the main factor.

If you have additional questions, please contact your child's school.

#### **When are the State tests for grades 3–8?**

ELA: March 25-26

Make-up ELA: March 27, March 30-April 1

Math: April 22-23

Make-up Math: April 24, April 27-28

#### **How do State tests benefit my child?**

You and your child benefit from State tests because they:

- Provide detailed information about whether your child is learning what is expected of them for their grade levels.
- Help schools determine which students or groups of students are progressing, which are falling behind and need more support, which are excelling, and which teachers might need extra support.
- Allow you to learn how your child's school is doing compared to other schools.

#### **I've heard that the State test is less stressful for students than it used to be. Is this true?**

Yes! Over the past few years, the New York State Education Department has made changes to the grades 3–8 tests in response to concerns from parents and educators. Those changes include:

- Moving to untimed testing
- Reducing the number of questions on the tests.
- Involving NYC teachers in developing test items.

#### **How do these tests factor into middle or high school admissions?**

Some middle and high schools have academically screened programs that use test scores as one of several criteria for admissions, as described in the [Middle School Admissions Guide](#) and [High School Admissions Guide](#). Students without test scores are eligible to apply to these programs, and schools

have been instructed to develop policies for evaluating these students. Please reach out to schools directly to learn more about their individual policies.

#### **I'm worried my child's teacher will be "teaching to the test." What is the impact of score results on teachers?**

- In response to family concerns, State regulation now says that student performance on New York State grades 3–8 ELA and Math tests will not be used in teachers' and principals' annual professional performance review ratings.
- Schools' curriculum is aligned to grade-level learning standards of what a child should know and be able to demonstrate.

#### **Can families opt their children out of State tests, or request an alternative evaluation?**

- With the exception of certain kinds of assessments for which parental consent is required, there is no State law or regulation specifically allowing parents to opt their children out of State tests or request an alternative evaluation. You and your child benefit from State tests because they provide detailed information about whether your child is learning what is expected of them for their grade levels. State tests also help schools determine which students or groups of students are doing well, which are falling behind and need more support, which teachers might need extra support, and trends and progress over time. The test also allows you to learn how your child's school is doing compared to other schools.
- If you are interested in opting your child out of State tests, you should consult with your child's principal. If, after consulting with the principal, any parent still wants to opt their child out of the exams, the principal will respect the parent's decision. The parent and the principal should maintain a written record of this conversation.

#### **What should a student do to prepare for the test?**

- Help your child get a good night's sleep the night before the exam and have a good breakfast in the morning.
- Tell your child you have confidence in his or her ability!

#### **When will I find out how my child performed on the tests?**

- New York State usually releases test scores during the summer and the scores will be made available through your child's [NYC Schools Account](#).
- The State distributes Individual Student Reports that provide detailed information about student performance.
- We encourage you to reach out to your child's teacher or principal to discuss State test scores and overall academic progress.

#### **What happens if my child does not take a State exam?**

It is important for your child to take the test. Please do all you can to support your child and ensure they are at school on testing days. Students who are absent will have a second chance to take the test during the make-up period. If your child is also absent during the make-up period, there will be no additional chances to take the test. Students will not be penalized or retained in the same grade solely for not taking a State test.