

2017 Superintendent Letter to Parents

Dear Parent,

This spring, the New York State Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Tests will be administered to students. ELA testing will take place March 28 – 30, and mathematics testing is scheduled for May 2 – 4. (Please note these dates are for the paper-based assessments. If your district is participating in computer-based testing for the operational exams, the timeline is different.)

The 2017 tests will be the same length and will be administered in the same way as the 2016 tests. As you may recall, the State Education Department, under the leadership of Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, made changes to the 2016 tests in response to concerns from parents and educators. There were also changes related to the principal and teacher evaluation system, which is called the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR).

After collaborating with the State's Technical Advisory Committee, which is made up of assessment experts from across the country, and the Board of Regents, which oversees education policy in New York, the Department determined that making any further changes for the 2017 tests would make it extremely difficult to measure year-to-year progress. At this time, no decisions regarding possible changes to the 2018 tests have been made.

Below you will find a summary of the changes that were made to the 2016 Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Tests that will be carried over to the 2017 tests.

Testing

- **Students who are still working on their exams will be allowed to continue to work, within the confines of the regular school day, beyond the recommended testing times.** By removing time limits, students will be able to work at their own pace and not have to worry about the clock while taking the 2017 tests. The tests are designed to measure what students know and are able to do, not how quickly they can finish.
- **Fewer questions on the tests.** The number of questions on the 2017 tests will be the same as the 2016 tests. For the 2016 tests, the State Education Department decreased the number of test questions on both the ELA and the Math Tests for all grade levels, compared to previous years. Fewer questions, as compared to 2015, will help reduce testing fatigue for students.
- **The tests have been thoroughly reviewed and constructed by New York State educators to ensure they measure what students are learning in their classrooms.** In response to concerns about the tests not covering the material that students are learning, the State Education Department brought teachers and other educators to Albany to review and select all passages and questions on the 2017 tests. Each passage and question on the 2017 test has been reviewed by at least 22 educators.

Teacher and Principal Evaluation/APPR

- **Student performance on the 2017 Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Tests will have no employment-related consequences for teacher and principal evaluations.** In December 2015, the Board of Regents approved a moratorium on using student scores on these exams for educators' consequential evaluation scores until the 2019-2020 school year. This means no teachers or principals in New York State public schools will be affected by the results of the 2017 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests.

Release of Test Questions and Instructional Reports

- **Test questions and instructional reports will be released before the end of the school year.** The State Education Department will release at least 75-percent of questions from the 2017 tests

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and the instructional reports for educators on or around June 1. You can view [2016 test questions](https://www.engageny.org/3-8) (<https://www.engageny.org/3-8>) on EngageNY.

Improved Parent Resources

- **Clearer Score Reports.** The 2016 Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Test Score Reports for parents were redesigned to be clearer and provide more information about what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. The 2017 reports will feature the same design and information.
- **More information.** [Additional information about assessments for parents](https://www.engageny.org/resource/assessment-parents-and-community-members) (<https://www.engageny.org/resource/assessment-parents-and-community-members>) is available on EngageNY. This website features background about different types of assessments and why assessments are valuable instructional tools. The site also includes helpful resources for parents.

Computer-Based Testing

- **Computer-based State assessments.** Some districts chose to administer the 2017 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests on the computer. The computer-based test will have the same questions as the paper version but students will take the test on a computer, tablet, or Chromebook.
- **Stronger instructional tools.** The State Education Department is helping districts begin to transition to computer-based testing (CBT), which has the potential to make the assessments stronger instructional tools and will make it possible to get test results back sooner.
- **The move to CBT.** The State plans to have additional districts utilize CBT next year. The long-term plan is to have all districts using CBT for annual state tests.

You can find more information about the [State tests](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/ei/eigen.html) (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/ei/eigen.html>) on the State Education Department's website.

Thank you for your time.