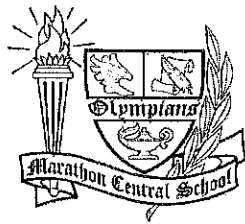


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March 11, 2016

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

As April is just around the corner, students and teachers are preparing for the annual New York State grades 3-8 Assessments. This past January, the New York State Education Department released changes to the 2016 Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Tests. Given the new changes, we felt it was important to reach out to families to inform them of the new expectations for the exams.

The first major change to the NYS Assessments is the tie between student scores and teachers' evaluations. For the next four years, NYS teachers will not be measured by their students' performance on the 3-8 assessments. The Board of Regents approved a freeze on using student test scores on these exams for official evaluation purposes.

The next change is NYSED has selected Questar Assessment, Inc. as the new test vendor, which will replace Pearson. Questar Assessment, Inc. brings extensive experience with assessments by providing services to 34 states and the District of Columbia.

A third change in the NYS Assessments is a greater involvement of educators in the test development process. This means there will be an increase in the number of teachers involved in creating and reviewing the assessments, selecting test questions, and writing test questions. If you would like more information on the involvement of teachers in the test creation process, it can be viewed at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/teacher/home.html>.

The fourth change stemmed from the consistent recommendations, made to NYSED, to reduce the length of the tests. In particular, NYSED heard that students would be better able to demonstrate close reading and thoughtful responses to questions if the ELA tests included fewer questions. Based on this feedback NYSED has decreased the number of test questions on both the Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Tests. The reduction of test questions will allow students more time to read the passages more closely and apply their knowledge and skill in answering the questions. It is expected to decrease testing fatigue for some students. Specifically, for each of the 3-8 ELA Tests, students will read one less passage and answer fewer multiple choice questions. Each of the 3-8 Mathematics Tests will also have fewer multiple choice questions for students to answer.

In addition to changes in the testing vendor, greater teacher involvement in test creation, and fewer test questions, NYSED received extensive feedback from educators around the State about the inability of students to work at their own pace on the Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Tests. As a result, beginning this year, all 3-8 ELA and Mathematics assessments are **untimed**. This change will provide students further opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do by allowing them to work at their own pace. In general, this means as long as students are productively working they will be allowed as much time as they need to complete the ELA and Mathematics tests. Additionally, this change in policy may help alleviate the pressures that some students may experience as a result of taking an assessment they must complete during a limited amount of time.

The outlined changes are the beginning steps that the NYS Education Commissioner, MaryEllen Elia, is implementing to bring NYS on the right path. If you have any questions about the changes in the 3-8 Assessments or if you would like to talk about the changes please feel free to call Jonathan Hillis at 849-3282, Rebecca Stone at 849-3117, or Kathleen Hoyt at 849-1228.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Hillis'.

Jonathan Hillis  
Appleby Elementary Principal

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*EMBRACE \* EDUCATE \* EMPOWER*