



SYRACUSE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Huntington PK-8 School

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Jaime Alicea
Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Huntington Parent or Guardian,

This spring, our schools will again administer the NYS Grades 3-8 assessments in English Language Arts (March 28-30, 2017) and Math (May 2-4, 2017). These tests ask students to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and skills in areas such as critical thinking, analytical writing, and problem solving, and we use the results to improve education for your child. While no single test provides a complete picture of student achievement, when combined with grades and teacher reports, annual assessments provide important information about a student's progress. Parents have the right to know whether their children are gaining the knowledge and skills they need to succeed beyond high school. The tests give us an objective measurement of how your child, your school, and your district are doing compared to others across the state. Additionally, the tests help ensure that students get the supports they need to be successful. All students must be prepared for success in college and careers.

Whether they want to go to college or straight into the workplace, students need to be able to think critically and solve complex problems. With these tools, students have more choices about their futures and can make the most of their opportunities. The State adopted more rigorous learning standards in 2010 to help ensure that students graduate ready to handle college coursework and 21st century careers. We began administering tests aligned to these higher standards in 2013.

We view these tests as a measure of our performance, not your child's. When fewer students take the exams we are left with an incomplete picture of how students are learning. This limits our ability to address issues that would improve how we educate our students.

Currently, time spent taking the annual State tests in ELA and math only accounts for about 1% of the academic year for students in grades 3-8. No additional statewide exams were added since the adoption of the higher learning standards in 2010.

Further, in response to parent and educator concerns, New York State has made a number of changes to testing this year. State law and Commissioner's regulations prohibit school districts from making promotion or placement decisions based solely or primarily on student performance on the Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests. Also, until December 31, 2018, school districts cannot include the results of the Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests on students' official transcripts or permanent records.

Also:

- Results not tied to evaluations:** Exam results **will not** be used to evaluate teachers or principals. A moratorium is in place until 2019 while the state develops a new evaluation system.
- Untimed tests:** Students will have as much time as they need to finish exams at their own pace.
- Fewer test questions:** Exams will be shorter with fewer questions in ELA and Math.
- More teacher involvement:** The state has increased the number of teachers who create and review exams. Last fall, teachers evaluated and selected questions for use on this spring's tests.

This summer, the State released the scores from the 2015 3-8 ELA and Math Tests. This was the third year that students took assessments aligned to the more rigorous college and career readiness learning standards. Overall, scores moved up incrementally. Several schools in the Syracuse City School District improved their accountability designations based on student performance and graduation rates, including **Huntington**.

I hope this information helps explain how we use the state's testing program to evaluate and measure student growth. While we will respect the wishes of any parent who requests their child not take the exams, we believe participation helps improve our instructional program (as well as comply with state and federal regulations). Should you decide to have your child not participate in the NYS testing program, please send in a note, with your name and signature, and phone number in the event we need to call you to confirm. Students who do not take the test will report to the gym, where they will sit quietly reading or making up work, if needed. **Cell phones** will not be permitted anywhere for any student, so please assist us with this by reminding your child.

If you have any questions at all, please feel free to contact me. We want to ensure you have all the answers you need on this important issue. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Huntington Administration & Staff