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March 15, 2017

Dear Parents:

On March 28th we will begin administering the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) Tests to all students in grades 3 through 8. The Math exams will be administered in May.

As in the past, state exams will be spread out over three days for each subject, with ELA exams taking place from March 28th to March 30<sup>th</sup>, and Math exams scheduled for May 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>. These exams challenge students to read complex texts, write well-reasoned responses, and solve real-world problems – assessing their level of academic readiness for further success in high school and college, and their preparation for future careers.

The tests are untimed, allowing students to work at their own pace for as long as they are productively working. This year NY State teachers have been involved directly in reviewing and writing the exams. Questions from previous exams are available for your review at [www.engageny.org/3-8](http://www.engageny.org/3-8), including 75% of the questions from the 2016 Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Tests that counted toward student scores. Results are intended to help students, parents, and teachers assess each child's academic progress. Results are not included on official transcripts or permanent records, and -- unlike past years -- the 2017 scores will not be used to evaluate individual teachers. The NY State Education Department instituted many changes to the exams last year, and those changes will continue this year. We hope that these changes will reduce the undue pressure felt by some students in past years.

While we are required to assess students annually we make every attempt to do so in a way that is the most helpful and least disruptive for students, teachers, and families. Every public school is required to administer Math and ELA exams to students in grades 3 – 8, with the nature of the exams determined by each state. The changes I have outlined reflect New York's efforts to increase participation and to help families and schools see the value in the exams and score reports that follow. If a parent requests in writing that their child not participate, then students will be assigned to a separate location during exam time which will serve as a study hall. If this will be the case with your child we ask that you inform us as soon as possible. The separate location for Middle School students will be the library and for Elementary School students will be the cafeteria. Feel free to contact me or your child's principal or teacher with any questions you have. You can find extensive resources available online at [www.engageny.org](http://www.engageny.org) and [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov).

Sincerely,

Dr. Roger P. Catania  
Superintendent of Schools