February 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

In March we will begin our testing schedule for the New York State Assessments. Our general schedule for testing is on the back side of this letter. Students will complete the assessments on their Chromebooks.

Over the last few years there has been much controversy regarding our 3-8th grade state testing program. While parents, students and even educators share in the concerns, it is important to recognize that the State Education Department has been listening to us and making improvements to the assessment system. Recent changes that have been made:

- Greater involvement of educators in the test development process
- Fewer questions which has resulted in a 2 day exam period instead of 3 days
- Assessments are no longer timed – students have as much time as they need
- Moratorium on the use of the exam scores for teacher/principal evaluation
- Release of a majority of test questions for educator review and professional development

It is important to note that aside from the controversy, there is value in the assessments. Just like our assessments that take place throughout the year in the classroom, our state assessments are used to measure growth, progress and mastery of content and more importantly, skills that are vital to students’ future success in school.

While it is certainly a parent’s right to choose to not have their child take the state assessments, assessments remain a required component of our educational system. Even though 3-8 assessments have no bearing on one’s ability to graduate, having the information relative to a students’ progress allows us to provide the support necessary to ensure their success. In addition, providing students with opportunities to experience assessments of this type prior to the time when they will have bearing on a student’s ability to graduate from high school, is an important process and experience.

It is our hope that if you have opted out of assessments in the past that you will consider allowing your child to participate this year. As a district, we make every effort to provide a stress free testing atmosphere and the support necessary to assist our students in persevering through a challenge. In the event that you still wish to opt your child out of the 3-8 assessments, we ask that you inform us in writing by March 13th. This advanced notice allows us to be prepared and eliminates any confusion once testing begins. Indicating which tests your child will not be taking eliminates the need for multiple notifications on your part.

If you wish to discuss anything further, we welcome the opportunity. Please reach out at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Janet O’Mara

Katie Cook
Our 2020 New York State Testing Schedule:

Grades 4-6 English Language Arts           Thursday, March 26 and Friday, March 27 at 9:15
Grades 7-8 English Language Arts           Tuesday, March 24 and Wednesday, March 25 at 8:00

Grades 4-6 Mathematics                    Wednesday, April 22 and Thursday April 23 at 9:15
Grades 7-8 Mathematics                    Monday, April 20 and Tuesday April 21 at 8:00

Grade 4 Science Performance               Monday May 18 - Thursday, May 28
Grade 4 Science Written                   Monday June 1st

Grade 8 Science Performance               Wednesday May 20 - Thursday May 21 (during science class)
Grade 8 Science Written                   Monday June 1st - periods 1-3

Algebra 1 Regents Exam                    Wednesday, June 18th at 12:15

Living Environment Regents Exam           Wednesday, June 17th at 12:15

Some tips to help your child do his/her best on the assessments:

- Have your child dress comfortably and arrive on time.
- Offer some words of encouragement to boost confidence.
- Encourage your child to get a good night’s sleep.
- Provide a light, healthy breakfast before school or encourage your child to get breakfast at school.
- Suggest a few deep breaths to relax before starting.
- Remind your child to read directions carefully and look at all answers before selecting.
- Remind him/her to check answers before handing in and complete any drafts or “work” to solve the problems.
- Practice with your child the “close reading” strategies they have been learning in class and remind him/her to use those strategies on both the ELA and the Mathematics Assessments.