

SCHODACK CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Schodack families,

This spring our schools will administer the New York State assessments for English Language Arts (Mar. 28-30) and Math (May 2-4).

We encourage parents to allow their children to take the assessments because the results help us improve the education we provide. For example, if we find a grade is struggling with a math concept we can enhance instruction in that area with new resources or look at new ways to teach the concept.

The results can also help parents by identifying specific areas where their children need additional help. We encourage parents to talk with their children's teachers about ways the school can provide additional support in these areas as well as ways parents can support learning at home.

New York State has also responded to parent concerns by making the following improvements:

- **Fewer test questions:** Exams are shorter with fewer questions in ELA and Math.
- **More test questions made public:** 75 percent of the questions from the 2016 assessments that counted toward student scores are posted online for viewing at www.engage.ny.org/3-8.
- **Untimed tests:** Students have as much time as they need to finish exams at their own pace.
- **More teacher involvement:** Twice as many New York State teachers are involved in developing and reviewing tests to ensure they correspond to learning taking place in the classroom. By 2018, all questions will be created by teachers.
- **Results not tied to evaluations:** This year's exam results will not be used to evaluate teachers or principals.
- **Improvements for students with IEP's:** Starting this year, the ELA test may be read aloud to certain students with Individualized Education Plans.

As always, if you have any questions please contact us. We are happy to answer any question you may have about testing.

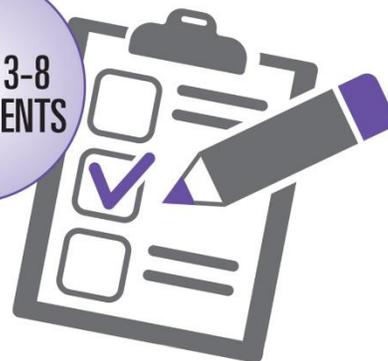
Sincerely,

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Frequently Asked Questions

When are the tests?

The 2017 test dates are:

Grades 3-8 ELA – March 28-30

Grade 3-8 Math – May 2-4

Gr. 4 Science Performance – May 24

Gr. 8 Science Performance – May 25

Gr. 4 & 8 Science Written – June 5

What do the tests measure?

The ELA tests measure your child's ability to read and determine the overall meaning of text. The math tests measure students' understanding of math procedures, as well as problems that require students to demonstrate their conceptual understanding and ability to apply math.

What does the school do with my child's results?

The results of the state assessments allow us to monitor student learning progress so that we can make sure they are on the path to graduating college and career ready. They help us evaluate our instructional programs and provide a clear picture on curriculum strengths and weaknesses. We then make adjustments that will help us to educate our students more effectively.

Why is it important for my child to take these tests?

Results from the annual grades 3-8 tests also help identify achievement gaps among different student populations. Without widespread participation in the tests, it is more difficult for school and district leaders to pinpoint these gaps and provide the support and necessary resources to the students who need it. For example, if we find your child and others are struggling with a math concept, we may enhance instruction in that area with new resources or adjust how we teach the concept.

How do the tests benefit my child?

In addition to helping us improve the way we educate your child, the tests also serve as useful practice in taking standardized tests. All students must pass five Regents exams in order to graduate. Taking these assessments now can help your child take future exams with confidence.

Are the tests timed?

No. The tests are untimed. Students are given as much time as they need to finish the exam at their own pace.

How long will it take my child to take the tests?

In Grades 3 – 4, the typical time for completion is about 50 minutes per day for 3 days each for ELA and math. In grades 5 – 8, the typical time for completion is 50-60 minutes per day for 3 days each for ELA and math. Last year, NYSED reduced the length of the tests. Total testing time accounts for less than 1% of class time each year.

What if my child did well on his or her report card, but not as well on the tests?

The annual tests are only one of several measures that are used to determine your child's comprehension in ELA and math. Report card grades include multiple indicators of a student's performance, such as participation, work habits, group projects, and homework—all of which are important in determining a child's academic achievement.

How can I help my child feel comfortable in taking the exam?

The best thing you can do for your child is to make sure they get a good night's sleep each night before the test. In our schools, we have students monitor their own progress throughout the year which helps them feel confident while taking ownership of their own learning.