

## BOARD OF EDUCATION

February, 2018

Dear Parent,

The arrival of spring signals the start of another seasonal activity for our students in Grades 3 through 8, the annual New York State (NYS) assessments for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. These annual tests are designed to measure how well students are mastering the NYS learning standards that guide classroom instruction. They also help to ensure that students are on track to graduate from high school with the critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning skills needed for success in college and the modern workplace. The tests also show how schools and districts are progressing with the learning standards.

In response to concerns from parents and educators, the State Education Department has made a number of changes to the annual Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Assessments. These changes were first implemented in 2016 and will continue for the 2018 administration of them.

### Untimed Testing

- Beginning in 2016, Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests are untimed so students who need more time to demonstrate what they know and can do will be able to work at their own pace. This means that as long as students are working productively, they will have as much time as they need to complete their tests, within the confines of the regular school day.

### Fewer Test Questions

- The number of test questions on the state assessments has been reduced.
- Grades 3-8 ELA Tests have one less reading passage and fewer questions than tests prior to 2016.
- Math Assessments also have fewer questions.

### Greater Teacher Involvement

- Hundreds of New York State educators were involved in creating and reviewing the 2018 assessments. Beginning in fall 2015 and going forward, New York State teachers have been—and will continue to be—involved in the review of all test questions and in the construction of test forms.
- Teachers from across the State gathered in Albany throughout the summer and fall of 2016 and 2017 to evaluate and select questions for the 2018 tests.
- For the first time ever, New York State teachers will write the test questions for the Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests. These questions will first be used on the 2018 tests.

### **Faster Results for Teachers and Improved Resources for Parents**

- Like last year, the State Education Department plans to have instructional reports returned to teachers by the end of the school year and release at least 75-percent of the test questions to inform instructional decisions.
- Also like last year, the 2018 Score Reports for parents will feature an updated clear design with more information about what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. These reports will be ready over the summer.

### **Computer-Based Testing:**

Over the next few years, the state will be moving to Computer-Based Testing (CBT) for students in Grades 3-8. Most districts across NYS will administer the 2018 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests on a computer for all or some grade levels and subjects. The State Education Department has stated that CBT will be a reality across all grade levels beginning in the 2019-20 school year. In Guilderland, we will be starting Computer Based Testing on a small scale this year. Doing so will give us the opportunity to fully assess how our students perform and to determine what programmatic changes need to be made to ensure our students are prepared for this new form of assessment. **In Guilderland, we will begin our transition to Computer Based Testing with the mathematics test for our Grade 5 students. That assessment will be administered on May 7 and 8, 2018.**

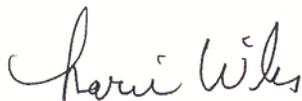
The CBT will have the same questions as the paper version, but students will take the test on a computer, tablet, or Chromebook. Guilderland Students in Grades 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 will continue to take traditional, paper-based tests for both ELA and Mathematics. Grade 5 students will also continue to take paper-based tests for ELA.

In the coming weeks and months leading up to the Grade 5 CBT for Math, students will be engaged in guided practice sessions to ensure that they are comfortable with the tools and platform to be used for CBT. Classroom teachers will co-facilitate these sessions with our Elementary Math Specialists. They will use a variety of tools including a Test Sampler developed to give students adequate time to experience a CBT. If you are interested in experiencing a CBT for yourself please go to <https://goo.gl/GVTWGF>.

You can find more information about the [State tests](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/ei/eigen.html) (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/ei/eigen.html>) on the State Education Department's website.

We look forward to your child's success with New York State tests this spring.

Sincerely,



Dr. Marie Wiles  
Superintendent of Schools



Dr. Demian Singleton  
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction