



*Inspiring Minds
Empowering Achievement
Building Community*

GARDEN CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ROBERT FEIRSEN, Ed.D

Superintendent of Schools

March 9, 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians:

New York State standardized testing for students in grades 3-8 will take place at the end of March and the beginning of May. I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with information about the upcoming tests and to inform you about school district procedures associated with these assessments.

As you may know, the federal and state governments still require all school districts to administer these tests. According to the New York State Education Department, these examinations are required components of every school district's core academic curriculum, and all students are expected to take the tests. It is also true that our school district uses test result information as part of a multifaceted process to identify individual student strengths and weaknesses, determine eligibility for certain educational services, and measure the impact of our instructional program.

In response to concerns raised about New York State's approach to standardized testing, the state last year implemented changes for the English language arts and mathematics assessments. These modifications remain in place for this year's testing and include the following:

- For this year, and for the next two years, student scores on the New York State tests in grades 3-8 will not be used in any form for purposes of teacher and principal evaluation.
- The number of questions on the English language arts (ELA) and mathematics exams will remain the same as in 2016. As you may recall, the number of questions on last year's exams was reduced, and that reduction remains in place.
- Both the ELA and mathematics tests remain untimed. The state believes this change allows students to work at their own pace, reduces stress, and provides a score that more accurately reflects what students know and can do rather than how quickly they can work.
- Teachers have been involved in test design. The State Education Department has assured us that each passage and question on the 2017 tests has been reviewed by at least 22 educators.
- Commissioner of Education Elia has pledged that at least 75% of 2017 test questions will be released to the public at the beginning of June.
- The 2017 score reports for parents will be presented in the same format used last year.

Our school district continues to recognize that members of our community hold diverse perspectives on the value and appropriateness of the New York State standardized testing program for grades 3-8. We again anticipate that in practice, some parents may not permit their children to take the ELA and mathematics exams. Accordingly, we plan to follow the same procedure as last year by allowing students whose parents will not permit them to be tested to go to an alternate location in order to avoid

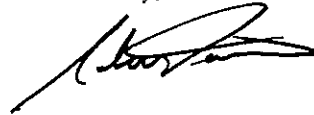
disrupting the testing process. Students who are relocated will be able to sit quietly and read. All reading material must be in printed or paper form: cell phones, e-readers, or other electronic devices will not be permitted.

If you will not permit your child to take the New York State Common Core Test in English Language Arts and/or the New York State Common Core Test in Mathematics, you must inform your child's principal in advance and in writing. The letter or email should include your child's name and grade level. It must also indicate if your intentions refer to the examination for English language arts, mathematics, or both. Please note that no student will be allowed to leave the testing room and move to an alternate location unless a letter from her/his parent is on file before the test in question is to be administered.

If your child does not take the test(s), he/she will not receive a valid score for the assessment(s). As noted above, the school district uses data from testing as part of a process to identify individual student strengths and weaknesses, determine eligibility for certain educational services, and measure the impact of our instructional program. We do not yet know for certain if school districts will be penalized in any way for not attaining desired levels of student participation.

Thank you for your cooperation as we approach the date for the administration of New York State tests for grades 3-8. Please contact your child's building principal if you have any additional questions about these assessments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Feirsen', written over a horizontal line.

Robert Feirsen, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

RF:cam