

engage^{ny}

Our Students. Their Moment.

Testing Reduction Report



Overview – Report Requirements

The enacted budget requires the Chancellor to submit a testing reduction report to the Legislature and Governor by June 1, 2015.

The purpose of today's discussion is to gather Board input for this report.

The report must outline recommendations that:

- Reduce the amount of state and local student testing;
- Improve the quality of the tests; and
- Minimize classroom preparation, student stress, and student anxiety.

Overview – Next Steps

The Department will convene an advisory group to recommend enhancements to the next generation of assessments.

These next generation assessments will maintain high learning standards and support great teaching, accountability, and meaningful measures of student progress, while reducing the amount of testing and test prep, improving test quality, and reducing student and adult stress.

Next generation assessments should include:

- More performance-based tasks that closely align with classroom instruction;
- Adaptive testing, which reduces test time by adapting test administration to the pattern of student responses to more quickly assess the level of knowledge and skills.

Overview – Our Current Tests Support Instruction

(see <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/memos/2015/July1-Release-of-Instructional-Reports--2015-04-29.pdf>)

The Department will continue to make instructionally-relevant information from State assessments available to educators and parents), including:

- Instructional reports for educators that include information about each student's response to each (100%) of the test questions, including whether the student answered the question correctly and the learning standard(s) measured by the question. These reports allow comparisons at the item, cluster, and standard levels for students, classroom, schools, districts, and regions of the state. The reports will be available July 1 to allow educators to use this information for summer curriculum writing, professional development, and planning activities.
- Once the test questions are released (50% currently, with more to be released as funds allow), additional educator reports will be available to allow analysis of the reasons for student incorrect responses on released items.
- Statewide parent reports are available following score release, which provide information about student strengths and areas in need of additional support, including the performance level, scale score, and sub-scores (reading, writing, and grade-level math clusters). Additional parent reports are being developed locally in different regions of the state.

Reduce Testing: Only Two Required State Tests Are Not Federal Mandates

- Federal law requires the following assessments:
 - Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) & Mathematics exams;
 - At least one Science exam in Grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12;
 - At least one High School ELA and Mathematics exam;
 - Additional assessments for English Language Learners; and
 - Alternate assessments for students with severe disabilities.
- There are only two required State tests that are not federal mandates*:
 - Regents Exam in US History & Government; and the
 - Regents Exam in Global History & Geography.**

*Some students may also be required to participate in field testing.

** For purposes of the social studies assessments required to earn a high school diploma, students who first enter grade nine in September 2011 and thereafter or who are otherwise eligible to receive a diploma in June 2015 and thereafter must pass either the Regents Exam in US History & Government or the Regents Exam in Global History & Geography.

Reduce Testing: Most other State and Local Tests Are Optional

- Optional State tests for advanced diploma and coursework purposes:
 - Additional Regents exams in mathematics and science.
- Optional local tests for instructional purposes:
 - Locally-selected diagnostic, interim, or benchmark assessments.
- Optional tests for APPR purposes:
 - State-designed supplemental assessments.

Reduce Testing: Regents Action

As part of its February 2014 report on Common Core implementation, a Regents workgroup made 19 recommendations, which were adopted by the full Board, including 12 related specifically to state and local assessments.

Reduce Testing: \$8.4 M Budget Request

- In order to address concerns from the public regarding testing time and the release of test questions, the Department has for several years requested funds to implement state-of-the-art printing and distribution processes for the Grades 3-8 tests.
 - By creating more versions of the tests, most field test questions could be embedded in the operational tests. This would substantially reduce the number of schools and students required to participate in stand-alone field tests.
 - In addition, the Department would be able to more rapidly build and maintain its test item bank, allowing for the release of significantly more test questions following test administration.

Reduce Testing: Regents Actions on Local Assessments

- **Teaching is the Core:** Teaching is the Core grants support local comprehensive reviews of testing practices to ensure that all locally-selected tests are necessary and contribute to the instructional program. Where districts choose to make material changes to reduce or eliminate unnecessary testing, the Department conducts expedited reviews of Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) plans.
- **Eliminate traditional standardized tests in grades K-2:** Disapprove APPR plans beginning in 2014-15 that include administration of traditional standardized tests in grades K-2 and remove all grade K-2 assessments from the list of approved locally-selected student assessments for APPR purposes.
- **Establish a 1 percent cap on time for locally-selected standardized testing:** Limit the time students may spend on standardized tests to comply with districts' locally selected measures as part of APPR. (The federally required State assessments in grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics account for less than 1% of instructional time.)
- **Offer flexibility to districts to further reduce local testing time required by APPR:** Allow the use of school-wide, group, team, or linked measures for APPR purposes.

Reduce Testing: State Actions

In 2014, the Governor and Legislature codified many of the Regents recommendations into law, and included new provisions, including:

- Requiring SED to provide testing transparency reports to school districts that highlight local testing practices;
- Enacting a 2% cap on time spent on test preparation activities;
- Prohibiting placing grade 3-8 test results on official transcripts for five years;
- Prohibition against making promotion or placement decisions based solely or primarily on student performance on state assessments in grades 3-8; and
- Providing for expedited reviews of APPR plans where the only change was to reduce local testing time.

Reduce Testing: Future Options

If New York wished to further reduce testing time, there are other options:

- **Adaptive testing** could reduce testing time by adapting test administration to the pattern of student test responses to more quickly assess the level of knowledge and skills. This approach, however, requires a mature central and local technology infrastructure, requires a very large item bank at high development cost, and is not currently approvable by USED since it likely results in off-grade-level testing.
- The next generation of testing could include **more performance-based tasks** that closely align with classroom instruction, but this will require significant investments to ensure reliability, validity, and fairness standards.
- The tests could be shortened further if we **stopped reliably measuring certain skills** (i.e., reading, writing, problem-solving), **stopped providing reliable instructional sub-score reports** (e.g., reading and writing sub-score reports, which require more questions), and/or **stopped measuring certain performance levels** (e.g., Level 4 – Advanced, which requires additional test questions).

Ensure Test Quality: Educator Review

Every item:

- Is designed from scratch to measure one or more of the learning standards.
- Meets rigorous criteria developed by NYSED.
- Meets industry best practice for item quality, fairness and accessibility.
- Is reviewed multiple times in the development cycle by New York State certified teachers.
- Is field-tested to ensure quality and fairness for diverse learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

Reduce Test Stress: Regents Actions on State Assessments

- **Provide high school students more time to meet the Common Core standards:** Extended the phase-in for Common Core-aligned Regents examinations required for graduation so that the class of 2022 is the first that is required to pass English and mathematics Regents exams at the proficiency (college- and career-ready) level.
- **Eliminate high stakes for students:** Issued guidance indicating that (1) the Department neither requires nor encourages districts to make promotion or placement decisions using student performance on state assessments in grades 3- 8 even where permitted by law; and (2) if districts choose to consider state assessments in grades 3-8 when making promotion or placement decisions, they should make adjustments to ensure students are not negatively impacted by the Common Core transition and must use multiple measures - not grades 3-8 state assessment results alone.
- **Offer smarter testing options for students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs):** Advocated for a federal ESEA waiver from the United States Education Department (USED) to allow students with severe disabilities who are not eligible for the alternate assessments to be assessed based on instructional level rather than chronological age and to allow English language learners to be assessed via the language acquisition test (NYSESLAT) rather than the English language arts exam for their first two years.

Reduce Test Stress: Ongoing Statewide Conversations

- **Conversations with students:** Help students understand that the purpose of testing is to understand what they know and can do and what they do not yet know or cannot yet do so the adults can provide additional assistance. Although meaningful learning will be challenging, demonstrating achievement through testing does not need to be an overly stressful process.
- **Conversations with teachers:** Acknowledge that, although new teacher evaluation systems provide a heightened context for test scores, stressful rote test preparation will not result in student learning or produce better test results on higher-order learning standards.
- **Conversations with parents:** Affirm parent concerns that the best education is wide not narrow, and the best tests are as short as possible while measuring the kinds of knowledge and skills we want for our children. We can and will work together to build better tests that help us better celebrate teaching and learning.

Next Steps

The testing reduction report law requires the Chancellor to work with students, parents, educators, school districts and other relevant stakeholders in preparing the report.

The statewide stakeholder organizations, as well as the Professional Standards Practice Board, have been asked to provide feedback and recommendations for inclusion in the report.

In addition, school visits and roundtables have been scheduled with members of the Board to solicit feedback and recommendations from parents and students.

engage^{ny}

Our Students. Their Moment.

Thank You.

