

March 8, 2016

Dear Parent or Guardian,

This spring, our schools will administer the NYS Grades 3-8 assessments in English Language Arts (April 5 – 7) and Math (April 13 – 15) as well as Grades 4 & 8 NYS Science assessments (the performance segments will be May 25 – June 3 and the written segments will be June 6 – 8).

We understand and respect the concerns some parents and guardians may have about testing. While we encourage test participation, we know that there will be parents who decide otherwise. However, we would like to explain how we use the results to improve education for your child as well as changes meant to improve testing conditions this year.

The most important thing we want parents to know is the state assessments provide us with important data that we use to improve education for all students. We view these tests as a measure of our performance, not your child's. For example, if we find a certain grade level is struggling with a math concept, we may enhance instruction in that area with new resources or adjust how we teach the concept. Our teachers, staff and administrators do everything they can to make students feel comfortable taking exams. Like any test, we ask our students to simply do their best.

In response to parent and educator concerns, New York State has also made a number of changes to testing this year (please see reverse side of this letter). In short, the changes include:

- **Fewer test questions:** Exams will be shorter with fewer questions in ELA and Math.
- **Untimed tests:** Students will have as much time as they need to finish exams at their own pace.
- **More teacher involvement:** The state has increased the number of teachers who create and review exams. Last fall, teachers evaluated and selected questions for use on this spring's tests.
- **Results not tied to evaluations:** Exam results will not be used to evaluate teachers or principals. A moratorium is in place until 2019 while the state develops a new evaluation system.

I hope this information helps explain how the Hudson City SD uses the state's assessments to evaluate and measure program effectiveness. While we will respect the wishes of any parent who requests their child not take the exams, we believe participation helps improve our instructional programs.

If you have any questions, please contact my office or your student's principal. We want to ensure you have all the answers you need on this important issue. If you plan to refuse any of the state exams, please contact your student's principal no later than March 31<sup>st</sup>. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Maria Lagana Suttmeier  
Superintendent of Schools