

Dear Parents/Guardians:

On April 1, 2, and 3 our elementary and junior high school students will be taking the grades 3-8 New York State (NYS) Assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and on April 30, May 1 and 2, grades 3-8 will take the NYS Math exam. To view the complete schedule including the upcoming NYS Science exam, please visit: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/schedules/2014/ei-schedule-14.pdf>

To help students prepare for these tests, I want to share with you some important tips to help your child feel as confident and comfortable as possible on testing days.

1. Please make sure your child arrives to school on time on testing days.
2. Make sure he/she gets enough sleep.
3. Make sure he/she eats a healthy breakfast prior to coming to school.
4. Although make-up tests are scheduled, it is always best for your child to take the test in a familiar classroom setting with their teacher.
5. Please note that electronic devices including cell phones are prohibited from testing rooms.

In addition to these tips, reading and writing on a regular basis is one of the most important factors for success on any assessment, regardless of the content area. The more a child reads and writes the more likely they will be to reach their highest potential on any test. Encourage your child to read different kinds of texts to help them increase their vocabulary development and become familiar with different styles of writing that will help them to become stronger students overall.

Some students become anxious when tackling standardized tests. While it is important to acknowledge the value of a test, it is equally important to remind them that a test is simply one measure of performance. The more relaxed and prepared a student is about an exam, the more likely they are to perform their best and truly demonstrate their best learning.

There has been much publicity recently about state testing and the Common Core and there is a lot of misinformation being presented. The Common Core State Standards adopted by the Board of Regents in 2010 emphasize critical thinking, careful reading of fiction and non-fiction, writing with evidence, effective communication of ideas, and real-world problem solving in mathematics. These core skills are critical to students' future success in high school and beyond. These new standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills your child will need years from now.

While testing has become an integral part of students' education at every level, we recognize the concerns you may have about the upcoming testing and want to not only alleviate any fears your child may have, but also any concerns you may have about the use of these assessments in placement or grading.

We do not use these assessments as a sole determination in any type of program placement. We simply look at them as another measure of performance we have, in addition to many other valuable measures. Each child is unique; we look at the whole child in school, not how they perform on any single assessment. We certainly do not want any of our students to stay home simply to avoid taking one of these tests for fear of this.

Additionally, we view these tests as a measure of our performance as educators. As soon as we receive the results of any test, we analyze them and look at ways we can improve the program for all students. This could mean revising our curriculum at a particular grade level or acquiring new resources to enhance instruction in an area in which our students experience difficulty. Individual, class and grade-level data all give us meaningful feedback that can be used to improve our curriculum and instruction for everyone.

If you have any questions about other ways you can assist your child at home or questions about the testing, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher, principal or reach out to me directly. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,  
Maria Suttmeier  
Superintendent of Schools  
Hudson City School District