

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act requires that schools administer assessments for ELA and Math annually in grades 3-8 and once in high school; for science, schools must administer assessments once in elementary, middle, and high school. In addition to fulfilling federal and State mandates, these exams also help gauge year-to-year progress for students and schools. Below is a list of questions and responses that you may have about these exams.

When are the State tests for grades 3–8?

In 2017, the ELA exams will be administered on March 28-30, with make-up exams on March 31, April 3 - 5. The math exams will be administered on May 2-4, with make-up exams on May 5, 8-10. A complete test schedule by grade level is available on the online school [calendar](#).

How are test results used?

State assessments are an important part of a student’s core educational program. They provide an evaluation of student mastery of content and skills in various courses of study, serve as a tool for measuring the degree to which students are on track to graduate high school college- and career-ready, and help shape future instruction. Along with student work on classroom assignments, projects, essays, and assessments, State test results give teachers important information about where students are on their path towards college and careers.

The New York City Department of Education uses test results to assess how schools are performing and to identify areas where schools can be better supported. In addition, some DOE programs and middle and high schools use State test results as one component of decisions about admissions; students without State test results can still apply for these programs but may need to take additional steps (see below for more information). These State tests will not have grade-promotion consequences for students or formal evaluation consequences for teachers or principals until at least the 2019-2020 school year. Any metrics based on these assessments will be used for developmental or formative purposes only.

How long does a student have to complete a State exam?

Like last year, this year’s exams are untimed. As long as students are continuing to work productively, they will be able to work at their own pace, and all students, including those with accommodations, may turn in the exam when they are finished. Schools should continue to group students in testing rooms based upon the expected testing times needed.

What happens during test administration if a student is absent?

If a student is absent during test administration, the school will administer the test during the make-up period. If a student is also absent during the make-up period, the student will not be tested.

Is there a provision for parents to opt their children out of State tests or request an alternative evaluation?

With the exception of certain areas in which parental consent is required, such as Committee on Special Education (CSE) evaluations for students with disabilities and certain federally-funded surveys and analyses specified under the federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment, there is no provision in the State statute or regulation allowing parents to opt their children out of State tests or request an alternative evaluation.

What should a principal do if parents express an interest in opting their children out of the State exams?

The principal should offer to meet with the parents to discuss their concerns. The principal may want to explain that over time the State has made changes to the exams in response to legitimate concerns from parents and educators over previous years' tests, including greater teacher involvement with test development activities. This year's exams will have the same number of questions as last year, which was reduced from the previous year, and will again not have a time limit for students as long as they are working productively. These updates will enable students to work at their own pace and should help alleviate testing stress for students and parents.

The principal may also want to explain that a student's test scores will be only one of a number of factors that evaluate his or her academic progress and that these scores will not be weighed more heavily than other factors such as class grade, projects, and classroom activities. The principal may also want to describe the impacts of refusing to sit for the State exams (as detailed below). If, after consulting with the principal, the parents still does not want their child to take the exams, the principal should respect the parents' decision and let them know that the school will work to the best of their ability to provide the child with an alternate educational activity (e.g., reading) during testing times. The parent and the principal should maintain a written record of this conversation.

What happens during test administration if a student refuses to take a State exam?

If a student is in school and refuses to take the entire State test, the school will bubble in "Refused Entire Test" on the answer document for each of the three days of administration. The school will make every effort to arrange for another instructional activity, such as reading or completing another project or assignment.

What happens after test administration if a student refuses to participate in State testing?

Students who do not participate will not receive a score, similar to students who were present for the exam but did not respond to any questions or for students whose exams were invalidated as a result of an administrative error. Please note that students who answer one or more questions on any part of the test, will be considered a tested student and receive a score.

The impact on students who refuse to sit for the exam is as follows:

For promotion decisions: Throughout the year, schools assess student progress toward attaining Common Core Learning Standards. Students are assessed holistically, using multiple measures, such as State test

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scores, grades, report cards, samples of student writing, projects, assignments, and other performance-based student work. While State test scores may be considered, they may not be the primary or major factor in promotion decisions. Students may not be penalized or retained in the same grade solely for not taking a State test.

If the school determines there is enough evidence that a student is making sufficient progress in math and ELA (and if the student has passed all core courses in grade 8), then the student will be promoted.

If the school determines that the student has not made sufficient progress in math and ELA, based on multiple pieces of evidence from the school year, the school will complete a promotion portfolio in order to determine the student's readiness for the next grade. The promotion portfolios align to the Common Core, represent an authentic assessment of student learning, and include flexibility for schools to incorporate assessments and student work completed throughout the year. If the student's promotion portfolio demonstrates that the student has met promotion standards, then the student will be promoted to the next grade level. Schools may not require students to complete a promotion portfolio simply because a student does not take the State test.

For more information about the promotion policies, including the promotion criteria for English language learners and students with IEPs, see the [Promotion Guide](#)¹.

For enrollment decisions: Due to the NYS [law](#)² passed in March 2014, no DOE school or program may use State test scores as the sole, primary, or major factor in their admissions policies. The processes described below are situations where State test scores are used as one of multiple criteria for admissions.

Some middle and high schools have academically screened programs that use test scores as one of several criteria for admissions, as described in the [Middle School Directories](#)³ and [High School Directory](#)⁴. Students without test scores are eligible to apply to these programs, and schools have been instructed to develop policies around how to account for missing test scores in admissions decisions. Please reach out to schools directly to learn more about their individual policies; if you have difficulties obtaining admissions policies from a school, please reach out to the school's [Family Leadership Coordinator](#).

For State and federal school accountability: Under State and federal accountability rules, the State measures each school's rate of participation on State tests. Regardless of the reason (i.e., absence or refusal), if less than 95% of a school's students or one or more of its subgroups of students (e.g., less than 95% of black students, students with disabilities, etc.) take the math or ELA assessments, the school is

¹<http://intranet.nycboe.net/NR/rdonlyres/71AF7A3C-2006-4748-B1D3-04252913AD98/0/Acpolicypromotionguide.pdf>

² <http://intranet.nycboe.net/NR/rdonlyres/E9E239C9-8C85-47DC-827D-DEA10CFD5D9D/0/305Generalpowersandduties.pdf>

³ <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/Middle/Resources/default.htm>

⁴ <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/High/Resources/default.htm>

designated having failed to make “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) for that school year. This leads to the following:

- After three years of missing AYP for the same subgroup, a school can be identified as a Local Assistance Plan (LAP) school. LAP schools are not considered “in good standing” and are generally subject to additional reporting and self-review requirements.
- Schools that do not meet the participation rate criteria are not eligible to be considered for “Reward school” status, which highlights schools identified as demonstrating high performance or high progress relative to other schools in the State.

How will this year’s State test results impact teacher and principal ratings and NYCDOE school accountability?

In accordance with State law, student performance on State 3-8 ELA and math tests will not be included in teachers’ and principals’ annual professional performance review ratings. Any metrics based on State test results will be included in teachers’ and principals’ non-transitional ratings, which are used for advisory purposes only. This year’s test results may be included in school performance measures presented in the NYCDOE’s [school quality guides](#). For more information, please visit the [Advance Intranet Page](#).

Can parents review their children’s tests after they have been administered?

Parents can view their child’s scores through their NYC Schools Account. The State also distributes Individual Student Reports that provide more detailed information about student performance. In addition, families may reach out to their child’s teacher or principal to discuss State test scores and overall academic progress.

Parents may review portions of their children’s tests after they have been administered. Parents may contact their children’s school to request a review of their child’s responses to open-ended questions in English Language Arts Book 2 and 3 and Mathematics Book 3. The review must take place in the presence of school personnel.

The State does not permit parents to review their children’s responses to the multiple choice component of their children’s test. Instead, they historically release approximately 50% of the questions on each test to represent the types of questions that appear on the exams.

What are field tests, and why are they administered? Is parent permission required for field testing? Can parents opt out of field testing?

Similar to State tests, there is no formal opt out provision or permission process for field tests. If a student is in school and refuses to take a field test, the school will also bubble in “Refused Entire Test” on the field test answer document. While there are not specific consequences for individual students who do not participate, field tests are an important part of the test-development process. Through field testing, the State tries out new questions to make sure they are valid, reliable, and unbiased before they are included in operational tests. Without field testing, there is no way to ensure that test questions are fair and accurate. Field testing ensures that questions are valid, meaning that the questions measure

what they are intended to measure. Field testing ensures reliability, meaning that the tests produce similar results, even when taken at different times by different students. An important part of this process is ensuring that test questions are not biased against any group of students.

What field tests are being administered this spring?

Field test questions will be included in the operational tests and additional standalone field tests will be administered later this spring. Because field testing takes place during the school day, the State has taken steps to minimize the impact of field testing on instructional time:

- Multiple choice field test questions are included on the operational math and ELA tests to reduce the number of standalone field tests required. So, within the operational tests administered in the spring, there will be some embedded multiple choice field test questions. These questions will not be included in students' scores. They will be interspersed throughout the sections of the test. Students will not know which questions are field test questions and which questions will count towards their score.
- In addition, standalone field tests will try out additional multiple choice questions and open-response questions, which cannot be included in the operational tests. Schools are only selected for standalone field testing once a year. Schools will be selected for field testing in math or ELA, not both. Schools that are selected will administer field tests in no more than two grades. School staff will not be responsible for scoring these field tests.
- Field tests take no more than one period to administer and students engage in regular instruction for the remainder of the school day.

More than 150 schools have volunteered to administer field tests via computer. As is the practice for the paper-based field test, schools participating in the computer-based test in the spring will be informed by the State of the grade and subject they are required to administer to students.