

## Student Participation in Grades 3–8 New York State Tests Parent Guide

*The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires that schools annually administer State exams in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3–8, and in science at least once during grades 3–5 and 6–9. In accordance with these requirements, once a year, public school students in grades 3–8 throughout the state take assessments administered for their grade levels in these subjects. 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?**

The ELA exams are administered April 1–April 3, with make-up exams on April 4, 7, and 8. The math exams are administered April 30–May 2, with make-up exams on May 5–7. A complete test schedule by grade level is available on the online school calendar: <http://schools.nyc.gov/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.

State test results are also used along with other factors to inform decisions about students and schools. Some middle and high schools use State test results to inform decisions about admission. The New York City Department of Education uses test results to assess how schools are doing and identify areas where schools can be better supported. The State uses test results to evaluate schools as required by State and federal accountability rules. In accordance with State regulations, New York City will begin using test scores as part of teachers’ evaluations beginning this school year.

### **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. For more information, see [this State guidance](#).

### **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 a student’s test scores will be only one of a number of factors that evaluate his or her progress and describe the impacts of opting out of the State exams (as detailed in this School Guide and in the corresponding Parent Guide). If, after consulting with the principal, the parents still want to opt their child out of 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.

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**Are parents required to use specific language when opting out of the State tests?**

With the exception of certain areas in which parental consent is required, there is no formal provision allowing parents to opt their children out of State tests. If you are considering opting your child out of the State tests, please speak with your child's principal about the implications of not participating in advance of the test dates.

**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.

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

If a student is in school and refuses to take a State test, 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.

For promotion decisions: Promotion portfolio assessments will be prepared based on specified exercises that assess students' proficiency. Results will be reviewed by the teacher, principal and then by the superintendent, who makes a final determination based upon standard benchmarks. Students who achieve proficiency based on the portfolio assessment will be promoted. Some students with IEPs and some English Language Learners have different promotion standards based on their needs, as described [here](#).

For enrollment decisions: Grades 3 and 4 test scores are used for Gifted and Talented placement in grades 4 and 5; grade 4 scores are used for the middle school admissions process; and grade 7 scores are used for the high school admissions process. Some middle and high schools have academically screened programs that use the scores as one of several criteria. Students' attendance rate may also be a factor in admissions decisions. Students without test scores can still apply to these programs, but they may be at a disadvantage because their applications won't have as much information as those of their peers. Some schools may review other information, but not all schools do. Additionally for the middle school admissions process, there are test-based programs that require the 4<sup>th</sup> grade scores for admissions; public school students without 4<sup>th</sup> grade scores are not eligible for test-based programs.

For State and federal school accountability: Under State and federal accountability rules, the State measures each school's rate of participation in State tests. Regardless of the reason (i.e., absence or refusal), if less than 95% of a school's students or of one or more of its subgroups of students (e.g., students with disabilities) take the math or ELA assessments, the school does not make "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP). Not making AYP has impacts on a school's state and federal accountability status that may affect its level of support and intervention. Please note that all intervention decisions are based on intensive review of many factors; no intervention would ever be made solely on the basis of the State test participation rate.



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

In accordance with State law, beginning this school year, student performance on the 3–8 ELA and math State tests is one of multiple measures that will be included in teachers' and principals' overall ratings. For more information, please visit <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/advance/>. This year's test results will also inform schools' DOE accountability measures. As the State tests change to align with the Common Core Learning Standards, we will continue to account for changes in the tests by measuring each school's performance in comparison to other schools.

### **My middle school received approval to “double test” students in accelerated math courses and administer both the State math test and a math Regents exam to these students. Can parents of these students decide not to have their children take the State math test?**

Yes. Even if a school received approval to double-test students in accelerated courses, parents can still choose not to have their children take the State math test if they are taking a math Regents exam. Prior to the administration of state exams, parents should speak with principals about their decision not to take the State test. The school will make every effort to arrange for another instructional activity, such as reading or completing another project or assignment. Additional information about the double testing waiver is available [here](#).