



Associate Commissioner
Office of Curriculum, Assessment and Educational Technology

September 2012

TO: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Public and Nonpublic Schools
Principals of Public, Charter, and Nonpublic Schools

FROM: Ken Wagner
Associate Commissioner for Curriculum, Assessment
and Educational Technology

SUBJECT: Field Testing in Grades 3-9 for the New York State Testing Program

This memorandum outlines the Department's plans for field testing for the Grades 3-8 New York State Testing Program (NYSTP) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics for the 2012-13 school year. An important part of the test development process is the field testing of questions in schools throughout New York State in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the New York State Testing Program. Our goal is to require the least amount of testing necessary to build and administer high quality assessments that provide accurate information about student achievement.

In order to minimize the instructional time required to administer field tests in schools during the 2012-13 school year, the Department will utilize the following strategies:

- a) Some field test questions will be embedded into the operational tests administered in April 2013^{*}, while limiting the assessments to three test sessions with a maximum length of 70 minutes per session in Grades 3 and 4[†] and 90 minutes per session in Grades 5-8.
- b) Fall stand-alone field tests will be administered in Grades 4-9 in approximately 550 selected schools on one day (chosen by the school) between October 23 and 25, 2012. The inclusion of fall stand-alone field tests will help us respond to requests from teachers and administrators that we reduce the number of schools required to administer field tests in the spring. Schools selected for the fall stand-alone field test will not be asked to administer a stand-alone field test in the spring.

^{*} Historically, unlike in other States, the Department prints and packs New York's test materials. As a result, only four forms of these tests can be produced. The limited number of forms constrains the number of field test questions that can be included in the operational tests, reducing, but not eliminating, the need for stand-alone field tests. Expanding the number of forms would significantly increase costs.

[†] This is a reduction in maximum testing time compared to 2012 for students in Grades 3 and 4.

- c) Stand-alone field tests will be administered in late spring 2013 and include the remaining field test questions that are essential but could not be included during either the October 2012 or April 2013 administrations. Most schools that administer the Grades 3-8 operational tests will administer a spring stand-alone field test on one day (chosen by the school) during the late spring field test period. Again, schools selected for the fall stand-alone field test will not be asked to administer a spring stand-alone field test.
- d) Both the fall and spring stand-alone field tests can be administered to students in a single class period of approximately 40 minutes.

The schools selected to participate in an October 2012 stand-alone field test will be notified shortly. Schools selected to participate in a spring 2013 stand-alone field test will be notified later in the school year.

Unlike with spring field tests, ***the October 2012 stand-alone field tests will be administered to students in Grades 4 - 9.*** The questions on the fall field tests will be aligned with the content taught in the students' prior grade. For example, the field tests administered in October 2012 to students in Grade 4 will cover the content taught in Grade 3, and the field tests administered to students in Grade 9 will cover the content taught in Grade 8. Spring 2013 stand-alone field tests will be administered in Grades 3-8 only and will cover the content taught at those students' grade level.

Schools selected for the October 2012 stand-alone field test will receive further instructions shortly, including the specific grade level and subject to be tested, as well as other details to assist the schools in planning. The October 2012 field tests for ELA and math must be administered on one specific day, selected by the school, from October 23 to 25 only, and returned to the Department's contractor by October 31, 2012.

Please note that field tests are a required component of the New York State Testing Program. They ensure that assessments are reliable and valid for their intended purposes, including the provision of useful information to teachers, students, and their families to help improve instruction and student learning.

If you have any questions about the Grades 3-8 ELA and mathematics assessments or field tests, please contact the Office of State Assessment at emscassessinfo@mail.nysed.gov.

We appreciate your efforts and look forward to further collaboration as the Common Core Learning Standards are implemented during the 2012-13 school year. Thank you for your hard work and support in maintaining the rigor and integrity of New York State's curriculum and assessment programs.