



**Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council (CPAC)**

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May 6, 2015

Board of Regents  
State Board of Education  
89 Washington Avenue, Room 110 EB  
Albany, New York 12234

Dear Members of the Board of Regents,

The Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council (CPAC) represents all the PAs/PTAs in New York City, and through them, the parents of the New York City public school system. We are an extremely diverse group of parents with diverse views. Nevertheless, we believe there is general consensus among New York City parents on what they would like to see from the state ELA and math state tests.

- (1) New York State test results should include not only a simple score but also detailed feedback on each student's strengths and challenges to help both teachers and parents better understand how to assist each child – where the child may need remediation, where a child should be enriched. This feedback is critical for the tests to have pedagogic value.
- (2) The state ELA and math tests should not drive instruction. While opinion varies on the optimal amount of test prep, and good test prep can reinforce skills and lesson, months and months of test prep should not be the norm. Every effort needs to be made so that the tests themselves do not distort the education process.
- (3) New York State tests should be published after they are taken by students. Teachers and administrators will gain a better understanding of the Regents' expectations. Only through transparency can parents and teachers trust the results of the assessments and better understand students' strengths and challenges. In this era of social media, it borders on the ridiculous to assume that photos of the tests have not been snapped, which may give undue advantage in future tests to certain teachers or schools. The tests should also be open to public scrutiny – tests hidden behind a veil of secrecy breed distrust and ridicule.

- (4) Upon request parents should be allowed to view their children's specific tests and children's responses – to verify the marking of the test, to ascertain whether their child has made “silly” errors or does not understand the material covered, and to build trust in the validity of the tests used to evaluate their children.
- (5) Results of state tests need to be made available in a more timely manner so that parents and the school system can assist children over the summer, teachers and principals can use the results to plan for the upcoming academic year, and if necessary, teachers can obtain additional professional development before the start of a new school year.
- (6) New York State tests should never be used as the sole determinant of a child's or teacher's abilities. They should never be the sole determinant of a child's promotion to the next grade or their acceptance into schools or programs.
- (7) Given that 4th grade ELA and math test scores may be used in the middle school admissions process, we wonder about the advisability of giving the state science exam in fourth grade when students need to focus their attention on ELA and math. We would encourage the Board of Regents to give the exam in an alternate year.

The true value of the state tests lies in their use as a diagnostic tool to evaluate student performance and help parents, teachers, and schools develop next steps for each child. While opinions vary widely in New York City on the value of state tests as part of the teacher evaluation process, parents do not wish the stress of this decision to compound the pressure students already feel when taking the test. We encourage the Board of Regents to make every effort to insulate students from this stress when taking the New York state ELA and math tests.

With great appreciation,

The CPAC Executive Board