



# James H. Vernon School

Dr. Valerie Vacchio  
Principal

March 16, 2017

Dear Vernon Families,

The spring season is here and with it our annual administration of state assessments for students in grades 3-8. At Vernon, grades 3-6 will participate. Changes made by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) last year, such as decreasing the number of test questions and shifting to untimed testing, continue to be in effect for the 2017 assessments.

### Administration of the 2017 assessments:

Children respond best to a testing situation when they are calm, relaxed, and well rested. Please have your child arrive on time for school. If your child is ill on a testing day, makeup tests will be administered. We are hoping for maximum pupil attendance during the regular testing period.

### Testing begins promptly at 9:00 A.M. on the following dates:

Assessment	Date(s) of regular testing
English Language Arts (ELA)	Tuesday, March 28, Wednesday, March 29, and Thursday, March 30
Mathematics	Tuesday, May 2, Wednesday, May 3, and Thursday, May 4
Science Performance (Grade 4 only)	One class per day, during the period May 24-June 2
Science Written (Grade 4 only)	Monday, June 5

While the assessments are now untimed, the NYSED has provided estimated times in which the assessments should be completed. If students would like to continue working beyond the estimated times, they will move to a separate, quiet testing location.

### Information for families refusing the New York State assessments:

1. A letter must be written to the principal specifying which exam(s) your child will be refusing, e.g., ELA, Mathematics, Science, and/or NYS field testing exams.
2. Your letter must be sent to the Vernon School to the attention of Dr. Valerie Vacchio, Principal.
3. **We would appreciate receiving this information no later than Wednesday, March 22, for the ELA and Wednesday, April 26, for mathematics,** so that we may plan accordingly.

Students refusing the exam will be supervised in a separate location from our test takers. Students refusing the exam will be instructed to bring multiple independent reading books (no word puzzles or games). Please keep in mind, no formal instruction will take place during the testing periods which could last approximately 60-90 minutes.

Please find information from the NYSED on the assessments on the opposite side of this letter; more information is available on the district website: [www.obenschools.org](http://www.obenschools.org). If you have any further questions, please contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Valerie Vacchio, Ed.D.  
Principal



## The 2017 Grades 3-8 New York State Assessments: What Parents Need to Know

Every spring, the Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Tests are administered to students across New York State. These annual tests are designed to measure how well students are mastering the learning standards that guide classroom instruction and help to ensure that students are on track to graduate from high school with the critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning skills needed for success in college and the modern workplace. The tests also show how schools and districts are progressing with the learning standards. Below you will find information about the 2017 tests.

### Untimed Testing

- The 2017 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests will be untimed so students who need more time to demonstrate what they know and can do will be able to work at their own pace. The 2016 tests were also untimed.
- In general, this means that as long as students are working productively, they will have as much time as they need to complete their tests, within the confines of the regular school day.

### Fewer Test Questions

- The number of test questions on the 2017 tests will be the same as the 2016 tests.
- Each of the 2016 Grades 3-8 ELA Tests had one less reading passage and fewer questions than tests from previous years. The 2016 Math Tests also had fewer questions.

### Greater Teacher Involvement

- Hundreds of New York State educators were involved in creating and reviewing the 2017 assessments.
- Beginning in fall 2015 and going forward, a greater number of New York State teachers has been—and will continue to be—involved in the review of all test questions and construction of test forms.
- Teachers from across the State gathered in Albany throughout the summer and fall of 2016 to evaluate and select questions for the 2017 tests.
- For the first time ever, New York State teachers will write the test questions for the Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests. These questions will first be used on the 2018 tests.

### Faster Results for Teachers and Improved Resources for Parents

- Like last year, the State Education Department plans to have instructional reports returned to teachers by the end of the school year and release at least 75-percent of the test questions.
- Also like last year, the 2017 Score Reports for parents will feature the updated clearer design and more information about what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. These will be ready over the summer.

### Computer-Based Testing

- This spring, some districts will administer the 2017 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests on the computer. The computer-based test (CBT) will have the same questions as the paper version but students will take the test on a computer, tablet, or Chromebook. The State plans to have more districts use CBT next year.
- The State is helping districts transition to CBT. The long-term plan is to have all districts use CBT for annual state tests because CBT has the potential to make the assessments stronger instructional tools and will make it possible to get test results back sooner.



# Agenda

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- **Annual Grades 3-8 English Language Arts & Mathematics Tests**
  - Test Content
  - Test Results
  - Redesigned Score Reports for Parents
  - Test Facts
- **Adjustments to the Tests**
  - Untimed
  - Fewer Questions
  - Greater Teacher Involvement
- **What's Next?**
- **Q+A**

## Test Content

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The annual Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Tests:

- ❑ Focus on the New York State learning standards, which guide classroom instruction in ELA and math;
- ❑ Measure important real-world skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, and writing; and
- ❑ Require students to explain their answers and describe and defend their reasoning.

## Test Results

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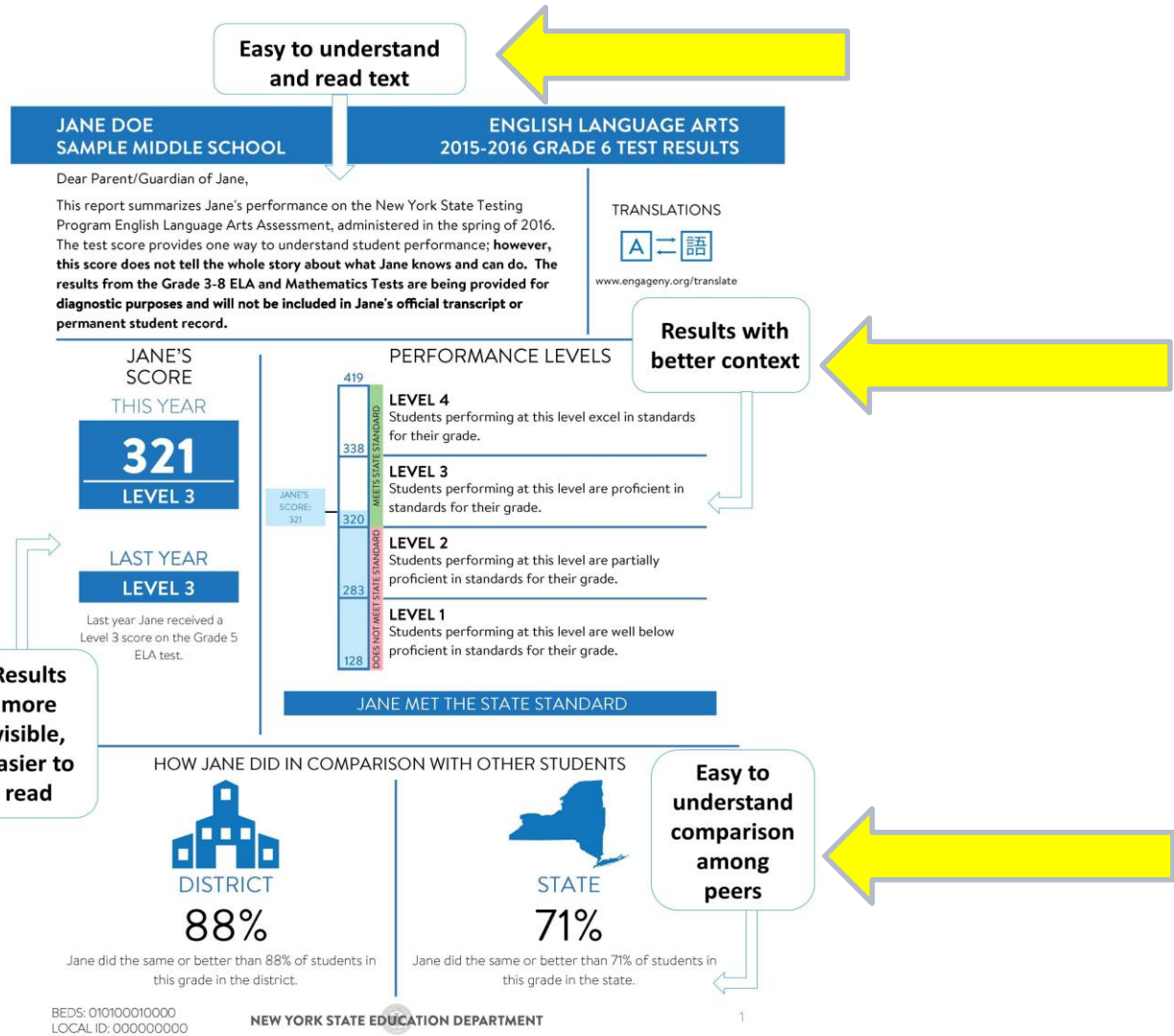
Your child's test results...

- ❑ serve as an 'academic checkup' to make sure your child is on track for the next grade level;
- ❑ measure progress over time so you can see your child's year-to-year performance; and
- ❑ provide a deeper level of information by pinpointing what skills your child has mastered and what skills your child is still developing.

This information is included in the redesigned **Score Reports** for parents. The updated reports are **easier to understand** and provide **more information about what students should know** and be able to do at each grade level.

# Redesigned Score Reports for Parents – Page 1

**Report  
Page 1**



Easy to understand and read text

Results with better context

Results more visible, easier to read

Easy to understand comparison among peers

# Redesigned Score Reports for Parents – Page 2

## Report Page 2

JANE DOE  
SAMPLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS  
2015-2016 GRADE 6 TEST RESULTS

The New York State Learning Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy describe what Jane should know and be able to do at each grade level. This section shows the number of points earned on the Reading and Writing from Sources test sections.

JANE'S SCORE	OF	MAX SCORE
21		35

JANE'S SCORE	OF	MAX SCORE
19		22

### READING

In this section, students were asked to:

- comprehend the explicit and implicit ideas present in grade-level text and recognize how they develop over the course of the text;
- describe characters in depth, and connect ideas and events;
- understand the meaning and effects of words and figurative and connotative phrases;**
- analyze the text's structure and organization, and identify how point of view is developed;
- integrate the knowledge and ideas conveyed in text using illustrations and logical connections between parts of the text.

### WRITING FROM SOURCES

In this section, students were asked to:

- make claims that show valid reasoning and sufficient textual evidence;**
- write about characters and describe how they relate to each other in the text;
- compare and contrast points of view and themes in texts;
- analyze events and actions in a text;
- determine the effect of language on aspects of a text and describe the importance of story and structural elements of the text;**
- communicate understanding by producing coherent writing that demonstrates grade-level English grammar and use.

Helpful next steps

Simplified explanation  
of what students are  
asked to know and be  
able to do

### SUPPORTING JANE'S SUCCESS

Contact Jane's teacher and ask which skills are the most challenging for Jane.

Ask your school how you will receive regular reports on Jane's progress.

If appropriate, seek student support services such as counseling or school guidance to help Jane be most successful.

Review classwork and homework with Jane to see how Jane's skills are progressing.

For more information about this test, the New York State standards, and how you can help Jane, go to:  
[www.engageny.org/parent-and-family-resources](http://www.engageny.org/parent-and-family-resources)

BEDS: 010100010000  
LOCAL ID: 000000000

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ALBANY



## Test Facts

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- ❑ The federal Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 requires that students in grades 3-8 are tested once a year in ELA and math. No additional federal or state required tests have been introduced since the adoption of more rigorous learning standards in 2010.
- ❑ State law and regulations of the Commissioner of Education prohibit school districts from making promotion or placement decisions based solely or primarily on student performance on the tests.
- ❑ Scores are not currently used to evaluate teachers in an official way.

## Test Changes

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- ❑ The State Education Department made several changes to the annual Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests in response to concerns from parents and educators.
- ❑ The changes were first introduced for the 2016 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests.
- ❑ The 2017 tests will be the same length and will be administered in the same way as the 2016 tests.

## Test Changes – No Time Limits

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- ❑ The **2017 tests will be untimed**, like the 2016 tests.
- ❑ Students who are still working on their exams will be allowed to continue to work, within the confines of the regular school day, beyond the recommended testing times.
- ❑ Without time limits, students are able to work at their own pace and not have to worry about the clock while taking the tests. **The tests are designed to measure what students know and are able to do, not how quickly they can finish.**

## Test Changes – Fewer Questions

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- ❑ Beginning last year, the State Education Department **decreased the number of test questions** on both the ELA and math tests for all grade levels, compared to previous years.
- ❑ The number of questions of the 2017 tests will be the same as the 2016 tests.
- ❑ Fewer questions will help to **reduce testing fatigue** for students.

## Test Changes – Greater Teacher Involvement

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- ❑ The 2017 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests were **thoroughly reviewed and constructed by New York State educators** to ensure they measure what students are learning in their classrooms.
- ❑ Educators from across the State came to Albany several times this past summer and fall to review and select all passages and questions on the 2017 tests.
- ❑ **Each passage and question on the 2017 tests has been reviewed by at least 22 educators.**

## Test Changes – Earlier Release Dates

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- ❑ **Test questions and instructional reports will be released on or around June 1.**
- ❑ An earlier release date for the instructional reports gives teachers more time to use the information before the end of the school year.
- ❑ The State Education Department will release at least **75-percent of test questions from the 2017 exams**, as it did last year. You can view the [2016 questions](http://www.engageny.org/3-8) (www.engageny.org/3-8) at EngageNY.

## What's next for the 3-8 tests? Computer-Based Testing

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- ❑ Computer-based tests are tests administered on a computer, tablet, or Chromebook. In other words, **students take the test on a computer** instead of using a pencil and paper.
- ❑ Computer-based testing (CBT) has the **potential to make the assessments stronger instructional tools and will make it possible to get test results back sooner.**
- ❑ This spring, some districts chose to participate in CBT for the Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests. The computer tests and the paper tests are the same tests.
- ❑ The State is helping **districts transition to CBT** and plans to have additional districts utilize CBT for the annual assessments next year.

## What's next for the 3-8 tests? Questions by Teachers

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- ❑ Since 2016, New York State teachers have been engaged in writing future test questions.
- ❑ The questions written by New York State teachers will first appear on the tests in 2018.



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# Questions + Answers

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# Learn more about the assessments

Visit [NYSED.gov](https://www.nysed.gov) and [EngageNY.org](https://www.engageNY.org)

Talk to your child's teacher