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Office of Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education

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

From: David Abrams 

Subject: Update on the 2006-07 NYSESLAT Program

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on the various, ongoing activities in support of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). The NYSESLAT program is designed to measure the progress of limited English proficient (LEP) students in achieving English proficiency.

In January 2007, you received specific information on ordering and shipping the NYSESLAT from Harcourt Assessment, Inc., the testing company working with the Department on this program. Specific information on test administration and scoring will be posted on the Department's web site well in advance of the testing periods.

Test Administration Dates

Teachers must administer the Speaking Session to their LEP students individually at a location separate from other students. Schools must administer the Speaking Session between April 23 and May 18, 2007.

The Listening, Reading, and Writing Sessions must be administered to groups of LEP students at separate times. Schools must administer the Listening, Reading, and Writing Sessions of NYSESLAT between May 7 and May 18, 2007. Each school may choose its own testing days within that time period. The complete schedule of NYSESLAT important dates is attached to this memorandum (Appendix A).

Field Testing

This year a NYSESLAT field test will be administered in the Spring, shortly before the NYSESLAT operational test. All selected schools must participate in the field test, as this is part of the process of continually developing future test questions and ensuring the validity of the NYSESLAT. Not all schools will be selected to participate on each field test. In the Spring 2007 field test, as in fall 2006 field test, selected schools will be asked to field test only one grade band in one modality. The selected schools will be given notification that they have been selected to test a specific grade band and a specific modality.

Ordering NYSESLAT Tests and Answer Sheets

In January 2007, Harcourt Assessment, Inc. mailed a letter and an instructional guide for ordering NYSESLAT to the principals of all public, nonpublic, and charter schools. The Harcourt Spectrum Instructional Guide provides information on how to place a NYSESLAT order electronically using their web site. Orders must be submitted by the school principal or by a staff person designated by the principal. Only one order per school building will be accepted.

Public and charter schools must obtain machine scannable answer sheets for NYSESLAT from their Regional Information Center (RIC) or large city school district scanning center. Nonpublic schools ordering the NYSESLAT will receive machine scannable answer sheets from the Department.

New in 2007

The Department and Harcourt Assessment, Inc. have carefully evaluated the suggestions for the improvement of NYSESLAT that New York State teachers and administrators have provided. Many of these enhancements will be included in the 2007 NYSESLAT operational test forms.

1. A new task will be included in Speaking sessions at all Grade spans on the 2007 NYSESLAT. This new task, in which students respond to a prompt about a photograph, is designed to elicit longer, more in-depth responses and to tap into students' ability to make inferences.
2. As the new Speaking task explained above is being phased into the NYSESLAT, the Repeat/Read Aloud task, which measures pronunciation and fluency, is being phased out of NYSESLAT. Two Repeat/Read Aloud questions will appear in the Speaking session at all grade spans on the 2007 NYSESLAT. The Repeat/Read Aloud questions will not appear on the test in 2008.
3. The Pre-Writing questions and the Writing task in Grades 2-12 have been redesigned to focus on topics drawn from New York State content-area curricula. More challenging Pre-Writing questions along with a topic-specific Writing prompt require students to formulate a well-developed, logically organized essay.
4. Poetry will be included in the Reading subtest in grades 2-12. Students will read and respond to a poem, in addition to reading and responding to the other passage types already found on the NYSESLAT—informational, literary, and functional.

5. The NYSESLAT Writing and Speaking rubrics have all been revised. The revised rubrics maintain the same measurement focuses as the previous rubrics, but (1) they present the information for each score point in bullet-point format to make the rubrics easier for teachers to use, (2) additional details were added to the information for some score points, and (3) some language was edited to make certain points clearer.

Timetable for Scoring, Scanning, and Processing

The Department and Harcourt Assessment, Inc. are working on a timetable for the scanning, and score data processing of the NYSESLAT. The timetable will be posted on the Department's NYSESLAT web page at a later date.

Item Maps

Item Maps showing the alignment of the questions on the Spring 2006 NYSESLAT with the New York State English as a Second Language (ESL) Learning Standards have been posted on the Department's website at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/home.shtml>. Teachers are encouraged to use their students' test results on the 2006 NYSESLAT in conjunction with the 2006 NYSESLAT Item Maps to obtain insight into their students' performance and to help guide ESL instruction.

Item Maps will again be provided following the administration of the Spring 2007 NYSESLAT. In order to promote LEP students' learning and progress on the NYSESLAT and content assessments, it is crucial that the ESL curriculum and instruction provided in the school reflect the standards and performance indicators for each appropriate grade and proficiency level.

Train the Trainer Workshop for Scoring NYSESLAT

Harcourt Assessment, Inc. and the Department will provide one turnkey training session in Albany on February 15, 2007. This "train the trainer" session, will be provided to representatives of the Bilingual/ESL Technical Assistance Center (BETAC) and of large city school districts and will focus on scoring the Speaking and Writing subtests. BETAC's will schedule training for teachers in the remaining districts.

Scoring Resources

Near the end of the NYSESLAT administration period, Harcourt Assessment, Inc. will ship scoring materials for the operational writing subtest. A toll-free Help Line for Scoring will also be available. Questions and answers for scoring will be posted on the Department's web site at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/home.shtml>.

Test Samplers

The purpose of the test samplers is to help teachers prepare students for taking NYSESLAT by making students familiar with the types of questions that will appear on the test. A new sampler will be available for teachers to use before the spring 2007 test administration. The sampler will include all new questions, and will include an example of every type of task that is found on the NYSESLAT. The updated test samplers and Directions for Administering will be

available in March on the Department's web site at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/samplers.htm>.

Parent Brochures

An updated informational brochure describing NYSESLAT and how it measures the progress of LEP students will be posted on the Department's web site at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/brochure/parent.htm>. The brochure will be available in English, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish.

Additional Information

Additional information and updates are posted regularly on the NYSESLAT web site at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/home.shtml>. All resources referenced in this memorandum will be available at that web site, along with the resources listed in Appendix B. The web site is your best source for the latest information on this important program and I urge you to check regularly for updates. In addition, specific information for teachers and administrators regarding test ordering, security, administration, and scoring will also be available on this web site.

Please contact us by email at emscassessinfo@mail.nysed.gov if you have questions concerning NYSESLAT for which you are unable to find answers in this memorandum or on our web site.

APPENDIX A

NYSESLAT 2007 IMPORTANT DATES

Activity	Target Dates
Turnkey Training Sessions on scoring NYSESLAT	February 15
Schools order tests via Spectrum	January 16 – March 16
Spring 2007 Field Testing-Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing	March 26-30
Speaking test booklets arrive at schools	April 18 – April 20
Administration of the Speaking Test	April 23 – May 18
Listening, Reading, and Writing test booklets arrive at schools	May 2 – May 4
Administration of the Listening, Reading, and Writing Tests	May 7 –May 18
Materials for scorer training arrive at schools	May 16-May 17
Questions and answers for scoring posted at http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat	May 21
Help Line for Scoring available-1-800-763-2306	May 21 – June 1
Scoring of constructed responses	May 21 – June 1
Return test booklets to Harcourt Assessment, Inc.	June 8

APPENDIX B
RESOURCES

Resource	Web Address
NYSESLAT Home Page	http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/home.shtml
Office of State Assessment	http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/
Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies	http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/biling/
BETAC Directory	http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/biling/betac.html
NYS English as a Second Language Learning Standards	http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/biling/resource/ESL/standards.html