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TO: Principals of Public and Nonpublic Schools

FROM: Thomas J. Schoeck 

SUBJECT: November 2008 Grade 5 Elementary-Level Social Studies Test

GENERAL INFORMATION

This memorandum provides essential information about the shipping, storage, and administration of test materials for the November 2008 Grade 5 Elementary-Level Social Studies Test. Additional information, including past editions of this test and a test sampler, is available on the Department's web site at: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa>. If you have any questions about the information in this memorandum, you may call 518-474-8220.

SCHEDULING THE GRADE 5 ELEMENTARY-LEVEL SOCIAL STUDIES TEST

The Grade 5 Elementary-Level Social Studies Test is to be administered on **Wednesday, November 12, and Thursday, November 13, 2008**. Makeups may be scheduled from Friday, November 14, through Tuesday, November 18, 2008.

STUDENTS TO BE TESTED

Except as noted below, all public school students in Grade 5 and all ungraded students who are age equivalent to students in Grade 5 must take the Grade 5 Elementary-Level Social Studies Test. This includes students who have been retained in Grade 5 and students in Grade 5 who attend programs operated by a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) or any other programs located outside the school. Nonpublic schools are encouraged to administer this test to their students in accordance with these same provisions.

Students with Disabilities

The Committee on Special Education (CSE) must decide for each student on a case-by-case basis and document on the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) whether the student will participate in the general State assessment or in the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) for students with severe disabilities. The criteria that the CSE must use to determine eligibility for the NYSAA is available at the web site: <http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/alterassessment/home.html>. Students who will be participating in the NYSAA should be coded as eligible for the Alternate Assessment on the Grade 5 Elementary-Level Social Studies Test answer sheet.

Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) Students

All LEP students are required to participate in this test. LEP students may take the test either in an alternative language or in English, whichever would be better for the student. LEP students may also use both the English and alternative language editions of the test simultaneously. Alternative language editions of the Grade 5 Elementary-Level Social Studies Test are provided in Chinese (Traditional),

Haitian Creole, and Spanish. This test may be translated orally into other languages for LEP students whose first language is one for which a written translation is not available from the Department. Schools are permitted to offer LEP students specific testing accommodations when taking this test (see page 3).

TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

Students Who Incur Disabilities Shortly Before Test Administration

Principals may provide testing accommodations for general education students who incur an injury (e.g., a broken arm) or experience the onset of a short- or long-term disability sustained or diagnosed within 30 days prior to the administration of State assessments. In these cases, when sufficient time is not available for the development of an IEP or a Section 504 Accommodation Plan (504 Plan), principals may authorize certain accommodations that will not significantly change the skills being tested. These accommodations are limited to:

- extending the time limit for a test,
- administering the test in a special location,
- recording the student's answers in any manner, and
- reading the test to the student (only for students whose vision is impaired).

Eligibility for these accommodations is based on the principal's professional discretion, but the principal may confer with members of the CSE or with other school personnel in making this determination. Pursuant to Section 100.3 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, building principals are responsible for administering State assessments and for maintaining the integrity of test content and programs in accordance with directions and procedures established by the Commissioner of Education.

Prior permission need not be obtained from the Department to authorize testing accommodations for general education students. However, a full written report concerning each authorization must be sent to the Office of State Assessment via fax to 518-402-5596. The report must be on school letterhead, must be signed by the principal, and must include the following information:

- the name of the student,
- the title of the test,
- a brief description of the student's injury or disability, and
- a listing of the accommodations that were authorized by the principal.

If the student is expected to continue to need testing accommodations, the principal must immediately make the appropriate referral for the development of an IEP or 504 Plan.

Students with Disabilities

All students with disabilities must be provided full access to State assessments to the extent that such testing is consistent with their individual needs. Students identified by the CSE of the district as having a disability should be allowed to use the testing accommodations specified in their IEP. Students who have been declassified may continue to be provided with the testing accommodations recommended by the local CSE at the time of declassification and specified in the student's declassification IEP.

All necessary arrangements for implementing testing accommodations should be planned well in advance of the test date. The principal is responsible for ensuring that students are provided with the testing accommodations specified in their IEP or 504 Plan.

More information on testing accommodations for students with disabilities is provided by the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) on its web site: <http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/testaccess/policyguide.htm>.

Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) Students

Schools may provide the following testing accommodations to LEP students:

- *Time Extension:* Schools may extend the test time for LEP students. Principals may use any reasonable extensions, such as “time and a half” (the required testing time plus one-half of that amount of time), in accordance with their best judgment about the needs of the LEP students. Principals should consult with each student’s classroom teacher in making these determinations.
- *Separate Location:* Schools are encouraged to provide optimal testing environments and facilities for all students. They may administer State tests to LEP students individually or in small groups in a separate location.
- *Bilingual Dictionaries and Glossaries:* LEP students may use bilingual dictionaries and glossaries when taking this examination. The bilingual dictionaries and glossaries may provide **only** direct translations of words. Bilingual dictionaries or glossaries that provide definitions or explanations are **not** permitted.
- *Simultaneous Use of English and Alternative Language Editions:* For this examination, LEP students may use both the English and alternative language editions of the test simultaneously. However, they should be carefully instructed to record all of their responses in only one of the two editions. The alternative language edition used by the student should be so indicated on the student’s answer sheet.
- *Oral Translations for Lower-Incidence Languages:* Schools may provide LEP students with an oral translation of this examination when there is no translated edition provided by the Department. All translations must be oral, direct translations of the English edition. Written translations are not allowed. No clarifications or explanations may be provided. Translators should receive copies of the English edition of the test booklets one hour prior to administration. The Department’s Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies, and the Bilingual/ESL Technical Assistance Centers (BETACs), can assist schools in locating suitable translators.
- *Writing Responses in the Native Language:* LEP students making use of alternative language editions or of oral translations of this examination may write their responses to the open-ended questions in their native language. Scoring the tests is the responsibility of the school. However, the Department’s Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies and the BETACs can assist schools in locating persons who can translate the students’ responses into English to facilitate scoring of the answer papers.

Former LEP Students

Effective September 2008, schools also may provide the test accommodations listed above under the heading “LEP Students” only to former LEP students who were identified as English language proficient based on their scores on one of the two most recent administrations of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT), either Spring 2007 or Spring 2008. These accommodations may not be provided to former LEP students who were identified as English language proficient prior to the 2007 NYSESLAT administration.

For each LEP student or former LEP student as defined above, bubble in the testing accommodations provided on the multiple choice answer sheet under LEP Accommodations.

SHIPPING OF TEST MATERIALS

The shipment containing the test materials for the Grade 5 Elementary-Level Social Studies Test will be delivered on November 6, 7, or 10. All test shipments will be delivered by UPS and may be delivered at any time between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Schools that do not receive their shipment of secure test materials by 12 p.m. on November 10 should track the shipment of test materials from the Department to their school on the Internet. Go to: <http://www.ups.com/tracking/tracking.html>. Click “Track by Reference Number.” In the Reference Number field, type the BEDS code of the school where you requested your tests should be shipped. If you are unable to track your shipment, or notice some other irregularity, contact the Office of State Assessment via fax at 518-474-2021.

SECURITY OF TESTING MATERIALS

As soon as each shipment of test materials arrives at the school or other approved location, it should be checked to verify that all materials indicated on the shipping notice have been received. **Shrink-wrapped secure test materials must *not* be opened until the day that part of the test is scheduled to be administered.** Except for the time you take inventory of your test shipment, you must keep all test materials in a safe or vault.

If a school determines that some materials are missing from its shipment, most missing materials may be obtained from the nearest regional center on the day of the test. Alternative language, braille, and large-type editions of these tests will ***not*** be available at most regional centers. For additional supplies of those materials, contact the Department via fax at 518-474-2021. Schools that need to obtain 25 or more copies of the test from the regional center must notify the Department as well as the regional center coordinator (to ensure that the regional centers will have adequate supplies to accommodate all schools). On or about October 30, 2008, a list of the regional centers will be posted on the Department’s web site at: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/08-09memo/5ss-regional-center.pdf>.

Contact the official in charge of the regional center before sending a representative to pick up test materials. In order to obtain an emergency supply of test materials from a regional center, the school’s representative must present a letter of authorization written on school letterhead stationery and signed by the principal. The letter must identify the person picking up the materials and list the specific materials requested. Anyone obtaining test materials must provide identification with a photograph and countersign the authorization letter and leave it with the official in charge of the regional center. Test materials may be picked up from the regional centers only on the scheduled date for the administration of that part of the test.

The principal of each school requesting tests is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for safeguarding the materials requested for the school. The safe or vault where test materials are being stored should be checked daily to ensure that the test materials have not been tampered with and that the test materials remain secure. The combination or key to the safe or vault must be maintained under strict security conditions to preclude access to the test materials by students and other unauthorized persons.

All teachers who assist in the administration of the Grade 5 Elementary-Level Social Studies Test are expected to sign the Deputy and Proctor Certificate. Similarly, principals are required to complete and sign the Examination Storage, Administration, and Scoring Certificate. Both certificates are included in the *New York State Grade 5 Elementary-Level Social Studies Test, Manual for Administrators and Teachers: November 2008 Edition*, which is available on the Department’s web site at: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/sam/det1551-08.pdf>. Printed copies of this manual will be included in each school’s shipment of test materials. The signed certificates, as well as student answer papers, must be retained on file in the school for one year.