THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

BUREAU CHIEF
OFFICE OF STATE ASSESSMENT

May 2015

TO: Principals of Public and Nonpublic Schools
Leaders of Charter Schools

FROM: Barbara M. Wallis

SUBJECT: Spring 2015 Grade 4 and Grade 8 Science Tests

GENERAL INFORMATION

This memorandum provides information concerning the shipping, storing, administration, and returning of materials for the Grades 4 and 8 Science Tests. Additional information on these tests is available at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/. If you have any questions about the information in this memorandum, you may call 518-474-8220.

DATES FOR THE SPRING 2015 GRADES 4 AND 8 SCIENCE TESTS

Test	Administration Dates	Makeup Dates
Grades 4 and 8 Science Performance Tests	Wednesday, May 20–Friday, May 29	N/A
Grades 4 and 8 Science Written Tests	Monday, June 1	Tuesday, June 2–Wednesday, June 3

The supply of test materials for your school will be sent in two shipments for each grade. Shipments will be delivered by UPS and may arrive at any time between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Please be sure that someone is available in your school or approved storage location during those hours to accept the shipments. Should any problems occur in connection with the delivery of test materials, please call this office at 518-474-8220 or 518-474-5902 immediately.

The dates on which shipment of tests will be delivered to schools are as follows:

Test	Delivery Dates
Grades 4 and 8 Science Performance Tests	Friday, May 15–Tuesday, May 19
Grades 4 and 8 Science Written Tests	Wednesday, May 27–Friday, May 29

Schools that do not receive their shipment of secure test materials by 12:00 p.m. on May 19 for the Performance Test and May 28 for the Written Test should track the shipment of test materials on the Internet.

1. Go to http://www.ups.com/tracking/tracking.html.
2. Click "Track by Reference."
3. In the Shipment Reference field, type the BEDS code of the school where you indicated you wanted your tests to be shipped.
4. Enter the Ship Date Range. (The initial ship date is May 14 for the Performance Test and May 26 for the Written Test.)
5. If you are unable to track your shipment or notice some other irregularity, contact the Office of State Assessment (OSA) via fax to 518-474-2021.

OBTAINING TEST MATERIALS FROM REGIONAL CENTERS

School administrators who need to obtain Grades 4 or 8 Science Written Tests that were not originally requested should contact the Department's Operations Group by calling 518-474-8220. Under the direction of the Operations Group, school administrators should contact the official in charge of their regional center to arrange for pickup of test materials. Information on regional centers is available at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/ei/eigen.html.

The person sent to pick up an emergency supply of test materials from a regional center must present authorization written on school letterhead and signed by the principal that lists the materials to be picked up and authorizes the person to pick up those materials. The person obtaining test materials must provide picture identification and must 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 the test. **Please note that Performance Test materials will not be sent to regional centers, only to the schools.**

SCORING MATERIALS

Schools will receive two printed copies each of the Rating Guides for the Grades 4 and 8 Science Performance Tests. Schools must print additional copies for each rater. The Department does not provide printed copies of the Scoring Keys and Rating Guides for the Written Tests. Instead, the Scoring Keys and Rating Guides for the Written Tests will be posted on the Department's web site at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/scoring/. Schools must print sufficient copies to supply one to each rater. Posting time for the Scoring Key and Rating Guides for the Written Tests will be approximately 3:00 p.m. on June 3.

SECURITY OF TEST MATERIALS

As soon as each shipment of test materials arrives at the school or other approved location, it should be checked by the principal to verify that all materials indicated on the shipping notice have been received. School officials who determine that some materials are missing from their shipment of Grade 4 or Grade 8 Science Test materials must contact OSA via fax to 518-474-2021 to obtain these materials. **Shrink-wrapped secure test materials must *not* be opened until the day the test is scheduled to be administered.** Except for taking inventory of the test shipment, schools must keep all test materials in a secure location.

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

Following the scoring of the Grades 4 and 8 Science Performance Tests, schools are required to return to the Department all *unused* Performance Test answer booklets, including large-type, braille, and translated editions, and all used and unused Performance Test Rating Guides. Schools must follow the complete instructions for the return of test materials found on page 13 of the *Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test Manual for Administrators and Teachers* or on page 14 of the Grade 8 Test Manual. These materials must be returned to:

Test Distribution Unit
New York State Education Department
Cultural Education Center
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12230

All teachers who assist in the administration and scoring of the Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test or the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test are expected to sign the *Deputy and Proctor Certificate* and the *Test Scoring Certificate* contained within the *New York State Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test Manual for Administrators and Teachers* and the *Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test Manual for Administrators and Teachers*. Principals are required to sign the *Test Scoring Certificate* and to complete and sign the *Test Storage Certificate*, also found within the test manuals. These three certificates, as well as student answer papers, must be retained on file in the school for one year.

USE OF COMMUNICATIONS DEVICES

All students are prohibited from bringing cell phones and certain other electronic devices, as defined in the script below, into a classroom or other location where a State test is being administered. Test proctors and school officials shall retain the right to collect and hold any prohibited electronic devices prior to the start of the test administration. Admission to the test shall be denied to any student who is in possession of a cell phone or other prohibited electronic device and refuses to relinquish it.

At the beginning of each test session, proctors must read the following statement to all students taking State tests:

You cannot have any communications device, including a cell phone, with you during this test or during any breaks (such as a restroom visit). Such devices include, but are not limited to:

- Cell phones
- Blackberry devices and other PDAs
- iPods and MP3 players
- iPads, tablets, and other eReaders
- Laptops, notebooks, or any other personal computing devices
- Cameras or other photographic equipment
- Headphones, headsets, or in-ear headphones such as earbuds
- Any other device capable of recording audio, photographic or video content, or capable of viewing or playing back such content

If you brought any of these items to the building today, and have not already stored it in your locker or turned it over to me or a school official, you must give it to me now. You may not keep your cell phone or any of these items with you, or near you, including in your pockets, backpack, desk, etc. Is there anyone who needs to give me any of these items now?

[*Proctor: repeat list of devices.*]

This is your last opportunity to do so before the test begins.

Any student observed with any prohibited device while taking a State test must be directed to turn the device over to the proctor immediately. To allow for all possible outcomes of procedural due process, the student should be allowed to complete the test. The incident must be reported promptly to the school principal. If the principal determines that the student had a prohibited device in his or her possession during the test administration, the student's test **must** be invalidated. No score may be calculated for that student.

The incident must be promptly reported, in writing, to OSA by fax to 518-474-1989 or by e-mail to emscassessinfo@nysed.gov, as is the case for all student-related testing irregularities, misadministrations, or other violations of State testing policy and procedures.

Note: Some students with disabilities may use certain recording/playback devices **only if** this accommodation is specifically required as a provision of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Accommodation Plan (504 Plan). In addition, a student may be allowed to retain an otherwise prohibited device in his or her possession if there is documentation on file at the school from a medical practitioner that the student requires such a device during testing. Without such documentation, the general policy on communications devices as provided above is in effect, and the school may not allow the student to retain any such equipment while testing.

STUDENTS TO BE TESTED

Except as noted below, all public school students in Grade 4 and Grade 8 must take the State assessments administered for their grade level. This includes students who have been retained in these grades. Nonpublic schools are strongly encouraged to administer these tests to their students in accordance with these same provisions. The birthdates of ungraded students should be used to determine who must be tested. For more information on ungraded students, see Appendix VI in the Grade 4 test manual or Appendix VII in the Grade 8 test manual. When determining which students will be participating in these tests, be sure to consider students who attend programs operated by the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) as well as any other programs located outside the school.

Grade 8 Accelerated Students

The Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test should be administered to students in the grade in which they will have received instruction in all the material in the Intermediate-Level Science Core Curriculum (5–8). While this is typically Grade 8, the test may also be administered to students in Grade 7 who will have received instruction in all the material in the Intermediate-Level Science Core Curriculum (5–8) and are being considered for placement in an accelerated high school-level science course when they are in Grade 8. The school may **not** use this assessment to retest any students who participated in this assessment last school year while in Grade 7. Schools are required to administer this assessment to students in Grade 8 who did not take this assessment in Grade 7, unless they will be taking a Regents Exam in science at the end of this school year.

Principals have the discretion to either require or waive the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test for accelerated Grade 8 students who did not take this exam during the last school year but who will be taking a Regents Exam in science at the end of this school year. For accelerated students for whom the school waives the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test, their achievement in science will be measured by their performance on the Regents Exam in science.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities must participate in the Grades 4 and 8 science tests unless a student's IEP, as developed by the Committee on Special Education (CSE), specifically indicates that the student should take the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA). A small percentage of students are recommended by their CSEs to participate in the NYSAA for students with severe cognitive disabilities. The criteria that the CSE must use to determine eligibility for the NYSAA are available on the Department's web site at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/alterassess.htm.

English Language Learners

All English language learners are required to participate in the Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test and the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test. They may take the tests in either an alternative language or in English, whichever would be better for the student. Translated editions of the Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test and the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test are provided in Chinese (Traditional), Haitian Creole, and Spanish. These tests may be translated orally into other languages for English language learners whose first language is one for which a written translation is not available from the Department. Schools are permitted to offer English language learners specific testing accommodations when taking these tests. (See page 6.)

TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

Students Who Incur Disabilities Shortly Before Test Administration

Principals may provide accommodations when testing general education students who incur an injury (e.g., a broken arm) or experience the onset of a short- or long-term disability acquired or diagnosed within 30 days prior to the administration of State assessments. In such cases, when sufficient time is not available for the development of an IEP or a 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. 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 OSA via fax to 518-474-1989. The report must be on school letterhead, must be signed by the principal, and must include the following information:

- the initials or ID number 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 consideration of an IEP or 504 Plan.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities must be provided with the testing accommodations specified in their IEP or 504 Plans when taking these tests. It is the principal's responsibility to ensure that this occurs and that all staff members who will be providing these testing accommodations are appropriately trained. Plan all necessary arrangements for implementing testing accommodations well in advance of the test date.

The Department's Office of Special Education provides more information on test access and accommodations for students with disabilities on its web site at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/testaccess/policyguide.htm. If you have questions on this topic for which you are unable to find answers on the web site, you may contact the Office of Special Education via e-mail to speced@nysed.gov.

English Language Learners

Schools may provide the following testing accommodations to English language learners:

- *Time Extension:* Schools may extend the test time for English language learners. 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 English language learners. 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 English language learners individually or in small groups in a separate location.
- *Bilingual Dictionaries and Glossaries:* English language learners may use bilingual dictionaries and glossaries when taking State exams in science. 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 Translated Editions:* For State exams in science, English language learners may use both an English and a translated edition of the test simultaneously. However, they should be instructed to record all of their responses in only one of the two editions. The translated edition used by the student should be so indicated on the student's answer sheet.
- *Oral Translation for Lower Incidence Languages:* Schools may provide English language learners with an oral translation of a State exam in science when there is no translated edition provided by the Department. All translations must be oral, direct translations of the English editions. Written translations are not allowed. No clarifications or explanations may be provided. The translator should receive a copy of the English edition of the test *one hour prior* to administration. The Department's Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies (telephone 518-474-8775) and the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks (RBE-RNs) can assist schools in locating suitable translators. A list of RBE-RNs is available at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/bilinged/.
- *Writing Responses in the Native Language:* English language learners may write their responses to the open-ended questions on science tests 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 RBE-RNs can assist schools in locating persons who can translate the students' responses into English to facilitate scoring of the answer papers.

Former English Language Learners

Schools may provide the testing accommodations listed above under the heading "Administering Examinations to English Language Learners" to Former English Language Learners who met the exiting criteria specified in Part 154-2 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education and were exited from English language learner status following their participation in one of the two most recent administrations (Spring 2013 or Spring 2014) of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). Such students either achieved an overall level of proficient on the NYSESLAT or, effective October 1, 2013, achieved an overall level of Advanced on the most recent administration of the NYSESLAT and scored at Level 3 or higher on the New York State Common Core Grades 3–8 English Language Arts Test.

These accommodations may not be provided to Former English language learners who were identified as English language proficient prior to the 2013 NYSESLAT administration.

SCORING OF THE GRADE 4 AND GRADE 8 SCIENCE TESTS

Teachers are **not** permitted to score their own students' answer papers.

REPORTING ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING IRREGULARITIES TO THE DEPARTMENT

The building principal is responsible for all aspects of the school's test administration and must take appropriate measures both to prevent, as much as possible, and to investigate all security breaches and irregularities associated with the administration and scoring of the Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test and the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test. In addition, the principal must report the following testing irregularities and misconduct by students, in writing on school letterhead and signed by the principal, to OSA via fax to 518-474-1989 or by e-mail to emscassessinfo@nysed.gov:

- All student infractions of the Department's policy prohibiting the possession or use of cell phones and other communications devices during State tests.
- All confirmed cases of students cheating.
- All interruptions of test sessions including those caused by power outages or fire alarms.
- All instances in which a State test is administered without Department authorization on a date outside the published statewide administration or makeup schedule.
- All instances in which scorers do not rate State tests in accordance with the scoring materials provided by the Department.
- All cases in which student test books or answer sheets are lost prior to either the scoring of the tests or submission of the answer sheets to the RIC or large-city scanning center.
- All instances of school officials or staff members providing students with other nonstandard test administrations, unrelated to cheating.

The report must include:

- The school's BEDS Code,
- The name and grade level of the test,
- A brief description of the incident,
- The number of students affected, and
- The New York State Student Identification System (NYSSIS) ID numbers or local ID numbers of affected students.

MANDATORY REPORTING OF TESTING IMPROPRIETIES BY ADULTS

The Department's Test Security Unit (TSU) handles all reports of testing improprieties by adults involved in the administration and scoring of State tests. School officials and personnel are required to report any incident of testing misconduct by an educator or other adult involved in testing. Reports should be made via the TSU website at http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tsei/ by submitting the incident report form located on the main page under "Report Educator Test Fraud."

Examples of Improper Testing Reported to the TSU

- All suspected or confirmed cases of a school official or staff member giving aid or impromptu lessons on specific test content to students immediately before or during a State test or altering student responses on a test paper.
- All cases in which a school official does not adhere to the Department policy concerning the finality of test scores as determined by the teacher scoring committees. This policy is explained on page 37 of the Grade 4 *Elementary-Level Science Test Manual* and on page 40 of the Grade 8 manual.
- All instances of an administrator or teacher instructing another administrator or teacher to alter or interfere with a student's test score.

ONLINE SUBMISSION OF TEACHER EVALUATIONS OF THE TEST TO THE DEPARTMENT

Suggestions and feedback from teachers are an important contribution to the test development process. The Department provides an online evaluation form for State assessments where teachers may respond to several specific questions and may make suggestions. Complete and submit your evaluation of the Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test or the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/teacher/evaluation.html.