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Ms. MaryEllen Elia  
Commissioner of Education  
New York State Education Department  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Commissioner Elia:

For the past two weeks you and members of the Board of Regents have been hearing stories from teachers from around the state about the problems with this year's grade 3-8 ELA tests. Most of these reports have focused on the serious problems with implementation of computer based testing while others focused on the developmental appropriateness of the tests. Now is a good time to pause and provide answers to the questions we posed back in February well before the administration of the tests. We raised a series of questions surrounding the administration of computer based tests that should be answered before New York State continues to expand its use.

- Does the method of testing, computer based versus paper and pencil, affect student outcomes on the test?
- Are students in grades 3-5 at a disadvantage in taking the tests on a computer because their computer skills are just developing?
- Does reading text on a computer screen for students in grades 3-5 cause eye strain and fatigue?
- Are all students able to receive all of their testing modifications with computer based testing?
- Do students in grades 3-5 have the keyboarding skills necessary to be successful on computer based testing?
- Does the disparity in access to computers at home have any impact on student performance on computer based testing at all grade levels?
- What is the state measuring – a student's knowledge or their ability to use a computer?
- Do high wealth communities have an advantage in computer based testing because of their students' access to technology at home?
- Will the need to offer keyboarding and digital interface (e.g. scrolling through a window, copying and pasting, dragging and dropping items) instruction diminish the time spent on instruction in the core subjects or eliminate programs such as the arts?

NYSUT believes these important questions need to be answered before expansion of the computer based testing pilot continues. We look forward to receiving your answers.

Sincerely,

  
Jolene DiBrango  
Executive Vice President