



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Commissioner of Education
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March 30, 2018

Ms. Jolene DiBrango
Executive Vice President
New York State United Teachers
800 Troy-Schenectady Road
Latham, NY 12110

Dear Executive Vice President DiBrango:

Thank you for your letter. As you know, we are implementing a multi-year plan that started with working with NYS educators to create the Next Generation Learning Standards and fully implementing them in classrooms across the State in September 2020 (see the timeline in the attachment). At the same time, we have listened to concerns from teachers and parents, and made significant changes to the Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics assessments as a result. This year, we are reducing the number of testing days for each subject by one while the assessments continue to be aligned with the current learning standards.

As we have communicated at several Board of Regents meetings and in our discussions with parents and teachers, we plan to align the State assessments with the Next Generation Learning Standards in spring 2021. At that time, we will conduct a full standard setting process, with guidance from our Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and input from educators, that will closely study the issue you have raised and make recommendations about how to ensure the results from the tests provide teachers, students, and parents with an accurate picture of student achievement in the Learning Standards for their grade level.

For the current tests, it is expected that a significant portion of students who score at Level 2 on the Grades 7 and 8 ELA and Mathematics Tests will, with additional years of instruction aligned with the learning standards, earn scores of 65 or higher (Level 3) on the Regents Examinations in Algebra I and ELA. The purpose of the Grades 3-8 Tests is 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. Results from these tests also help identify achievement gaps among different student populations.

The Regents Examinations are end-of-course exams that measure student achievement in a specific high school course of study. Passing a Regents Examination at Level 3 is sufficient for earning a high school diploma. It does not signify that a student would not need additional support to succeed at the next level after graduating from high school. In this respect, a score at Level 3 on a Regents Examination in ELA or Mathematics most

closely corresponds to a score at Level 2 on the Grades 3-8 Tests. We understand your concern with this. At the July 2018 standards review, NYS educators will have the first opportunity to address this. Further, we will closely study this issue when we undergo the full standard setting process for the Next Generation Learning Assessments.

The process to fully implement the Next Generation Learning Standards and Assessments is a multi-year process. As such, the 2018 Grades 3-8 Tests provide an important interim step on the roadmap to full implementation of these NYS educator-driven learning standards and assessments in the 2020-21 school year. As previously mentioned, the Department is currently engaged in planning for the Standards Review meeting for this new interim test design with NYS educators this July. National experts in large-scale, standardized student achievement testing that serve on the Department's TAC are providing guidance and feedback regarding research-based best practices for this type of transition for an existing assessment program.

Because the 2018 tests reflect a significant change in format but continue to measure the same learning standards, the TAC has recommended a Standards Review meeting which differs somewhat from a full standard setting meeting. The primary difference is that, for the Standards Review meeting, the ranges for the scores within the performance levels will be tentatively set by equating to the current achievement levels for this assessment program. Again, a full standard setting process will be conducted following the first administration of the new Grades 3-8 Tests measuring the Next Generation Learning Standards in ELA and Mathematics in 2021. That full standard setting process will closely study the issue you have raised.

Booklets containing the complete set of test questions comprising the 2018 Tests will be used at the Standards Review meeting to capture the recommendations of NYS educators regarding student achievement in relation to the Learning Standards. As part of the standards review process, the NYS educators will be reviewing and making recommendations on the descriptions of the achievement expected to be demonstrated by students in each of the four performance levels. This will provide the opportunity for the NYS educators to address the concerns that you raised in your letter. Additionally, the recommendations from NYS educators will help ensure that the results from the Grades 3-8 Tests provide teachers, students, and parents with an accurate picture of student achievement in the Learning Standards for their grade level.

We are counting on your ongoing partnership as we continue collaborating with NYS educators in successfully implementing the transition that will culminate with our students benefiting from classroom instruction and new State assessments aligned with the Next Generation Learning Standards.

Sincerely,



MaryEllen Elia
Commissioner

Attachment

Next Generation Learning Standards Roadmap and Implementation Timeline

From: <http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/next-generation-learning-standards-and-assessment-implementation-timeline>

The Next Generation English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Implementation Roadmap is a document prepared by the State Education Department to assist educators' transition to fully implement the new Next Generation Standards. The Roadmap's goals and activities were designed by the State Education Department in collaboration with various local school districts and stakeholders to ensure that all New York State schools would be equipped to implement the Next Generation Learning Standards. The overall timeline for the implementation of the Next Generation Learning Standards for ELA and Mathematics is as follows:

- **September 2017:** Adoption of NYS Next Generation Learning Standards.
- **Phase I: Raise Awareness (Winter 2018-Winter/Spring 2019):** Professional development on NYS Next Generation Learning Standards; two-day assessments measuring the 2011 P-12 Learning Standards.
- **Phase II: Build Capacity (Spring 2019-Summer 2020):** Professional development continuing on NYS Next Generation Learning Standards; two-day assessments measuring the 2011 P-12 Learning Standards.
- **Phase III Full Implementation (September 2020 – ongoing):** Full implementation of the NYS Next Generation Learning Standards.
- **Spring 2021:** New grades 3-8 tests measuring the NYS Next Generation Learning Standards. The timeline regarding the full-implementation/assessment alignment at the high-school level has not yet been determined and will be forthcoming; however, full-implementation/assessment alignment will not be before the school year 2020-2021.