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To: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Schools
Administrators of Charter Schools
Regional Information Center Directors

From: James A. Kadamus 

Subject: Reporting on Grades 3-8 Assessments

As you know, in 2005-06, New York State will initiate English language arts and mathematics assessments in grades 3-8, as required under No Child Left Behind. To ease the transition to these tests, the Department has made a number of resources and training materials available to school districts.

Because these are new assessments, a number of steps must be taken to correctly assess and report student performance. Some of these steps have been completed or are in process:

- Resource Guides with Core Curricula, with grade-specific performance indicators in English language arts and mathematics have been developed.
- Test questions measuring these indicators were developed and field tested in State schools.
- Psychometrically sound tests are being developed for printing and distribution to schools.
- Scoring rubrics are being developed for extended-response questions.

The following additional steps must be taken after test administration:

- CTB/McGraw-Hill, using data from the operational tests, will determine a scale for each test and map the raw test scores onto the scale.
- In July 2006, CTB/McGraw-Hill will conduct standard-setting sessions with New York State teachers to determine for each test the number of points that a student must earn to indicate partial proficiency (Level 2), proficiency (Level 3), and advanced (Level 4) performance.

Only after these steps are completed will student test results be useful for making decisions about instruction and curriculum at the individual or group levels.

We understand that schools are eager to have test results as early as possible in order to make changes in curriculum and instruction. We are, however, respectfully requesting that districts and schools not use raw score data to make decisions or estimate student performance. Accordingly, school districts, BOCES, Regional Information Centers, and private firms should not produce preliminary reports showing item-level performance or number of items correct. The Department's

Technical Advisory Group has strongly advised the Department that such analyses would be psychometrically unsound and could be misleading. Such analyses would not be a basis for sound decision-making on changes in curriculum and instruction.

The Department is contracting with a vendor to provide individual student reports, school and district summary reports, and analyses of school and district performance at the performance indicator level. We will convene a committee of practitioners to consult with the vendor in the development of these reports. The intention is that the reports will provide information that will allow parents, teachers and administrators to understand the strengths and weakness of each student and of the school curriculum in order to improve student performance. These reports will be available without charge to each public school through the State Repository System, described in my June 2005 memorandum available at <http://emsc.nysed.gov/irts/fieldmemo-datacollection2.htm>. These reports will be available within a short time after student scale scores are available. Scaling and standard setting will not be repeated in future years, thus test results will be available much earlier beginning in 2006-07.

I want to thank you in advance for your cooperation as we implement this new testing system. For the latest information on this initiative, I invite your to visit the *Latest News on Grades 3-8 Testing* website at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/3-8/home.html>.

cc: David Abrams
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