

Lancaster CSD

2017 Annual Assessment Talking Points

Why Test?

- All students must be prepared for success in college and careers.
- Whether they want to go to college or straight into the workplace, students need to be able to think critically and solve complex problems. With these tools, students have more choices about their futures and can make the most of their opportunities.
- The annual assessments are only one of several indicators of student performance. However, they provide objective information about how students are progressing toward the higher level skills and knowledge required to be successful after high school. Parents have a right to this information.
- Tests objectively inform parents and teachers about their students' progress compared to other students across the state.
 - Annual assessments are also used to help ensure that traditionally underserved students—students receiving special education or ESL services, students from low-income communities, or students of color—are not overlooked.

Test Changes

- In response to concerns from parents and educators, the State Education Department made changes to the annual Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Assessments. These changes were first implemented for the 2016 tests.
- Like last year, this year's assessments will be untimed and have fewer questions. This basically means that students will have as much time as they need on the test during the confines of the regular school day, as long as they are working productively. The relaxed timing, coupled with fewer questions, will help reduce test stress for students.
- Additionally, all questions on the 2017 assessments were reviewed by at least 22 New York State educators. If teachers did not like a test question, the question was pulled from the test and replaced with a question that the teachers liked.
- The State Education Department plans to return the instructional reports based on the 2017 assessment results to schools before the end of the school year. This was the case in 2016 and meant that teachers had a few weeks before summer break to use the information from the reports in the classroom.
- The State Education Department also plans to release 75-percent of the questions from this year's tests. Last year was the first time the State released such a high percentage of test questions. The [2016 test questions](https://www.engageny.org/3-8) (https://www.engageny.org/3-8) are online at EngageNY.
- The 2017 Score Reports for Parents will feature the redesigned format and easy-to-understand language that was introduced in 2016. The updated reports are clearer and provide more information about what students should know and be able to do at each grade level.
- New this year, for the first time, some districts will administer the 2017 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests on the computer. Computer-based testing (CBT) has the potential to make the assessments stronger instructional tools and will make it possible to get test results back sooner.
- The computer-based test will have the same questions as the paper version but students will take the test on a computer or tablet. The State Education Department plans to have additional

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districts utilize CBT next year. The long-term plan is to have all districts using CBT for annual state tests.

Moving Forward

- While it is too early to discuss specifics about the 2018 tests, the State is committed to making further improvements to the testing program.
 - For the first time ever, New York State teachers will write the test questions for the Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Tests. The plan is for these questions to be used on the 2018 tests for the first time;
 - The State will continue to help districts transition to CBT, which has the potential to reduce testing time and return results faster.