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Dear Iroquois Families,

The Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA] is a law that outlines how states can use federal money to support public schools. In January 2018, the federal government approved New York State's plan to spend the approximate \$1.6 billion the state receives annually under ESSA. The primary purpose of the ESSA legislation is to promote equity of access to education that is not dependent on who students are, where they live or where they receive their education. A key focus of ESSA is the use of state assessments, both 3-8 and Regents exams, graduation rates and college and career readiness.

The 2020 Grades 3-8 New York State (NYS) Assessments are fast approaching. NYS designs the tests to measure how well students are mastering the learning standards that guide classroom instruction and help ensure students are on track with critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning. The members of the New York State Education department have recognized the concerns voiced from parents, teachers and students regarding the assessments. **The scores for the 3-8 ELA and Mathematics assessments are not used for student report cards, or teacher/principal evaluation. Additionally, the amount of testing time has been reduced from three to two days.**

Historically, those Iroquois students who participate, have scored well on these assessments. The results are used to determine the quality of curriculum and to determine where our instructional focus may need additional support. The more students who participate, the more precise our data are.

However, a requirement of ESSA that schools in our district have had difficulty achieving is the 95% tested requirement. Because our current participation rate is much lower, our ESSA data are negatively affected. This could cause several implications for our district including unnecessary NYS planning, reporting, and a financial impact.

We acknowledge that families must make a very important decision regarding their child's participation in these important assessments. We encourage families to review the information below and the included document "5 Things Every Parent Should Know about New York State's plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act" to aid in their decision.

**How are the test questions created?**

Teachers from across the state serve on committees to write, evaluate and select the questions for the assessment. In fact, multiple teachers from Western New York served on these committees to make sure all questions are appropriate for the intended grade level.

**Has the length of testing been reduced?**

Yes. The test sessions have been reduced by 33%. With fewer sessions, there are substantially fewer questions. Additionally, the tests are now untimed, so students are able to spend the time fully showcasing their entire depth of knowledge without anxiety.

**Can teachers review and discuss test questions to improve instruction and curriculum?**

Yes. The NYS Education Department will release at least 75% of test questions. The department will also have instructional reports that can be used to analyze the curriculum.

This is our third year where computer-based testing will be utilized district wide for Grades 3-8 testing. Based on previous years, the District realizes this experience improves student's capabilities as they prepare for the future.

Thank you for taking the time to familiarize yourself with the NYS Education Department's modifications to the Grades 3-8 assessments. Please remember to review your school calendar to make sure your child is rested and prepared to showcase their expertise in ELA and Mathematics. You are encouraged to contact your child's building principal should you have additional questions.

Sincerely,



Douglas R. Scofield  
Superintendent

# 5

## Things every **parent** should know about New York State's plan for the **Every Student Succeeds Act**



### What is ESSA?

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is a law that outlines how states can use federal money to support public schools. In January 2018, the federal government approved New York State's plan to spend the approximately \$1.6 billion the state receives annually under ESSA.

### Why does it matter?

New York State is committed to ensuring that all students succeed and thrive in school no matter who they are, where they live, where they go to school, or where they come from. Since fall 2016, New York State asked for feedback to design a plan that improves equity, access, and opportunity for *all* students.

### What do parents need to know?

Below are highlights of important elements for parents and families in the plan. We encourage you to visit [the ESSA Section of NYSED's website](#) to learn more about the plan.

1

## New York State values a well-rounded education for all.

Parents and families should know how their child's school is performing in many areas, not just academic subjects.

### Schools and districts will be measured annually on these indicators

### Future indicators

#### For all schools

#### For high schools

- English language arts
- Math
- Science
- Progress in learning English (for those who are learning English as an additional language)
- Chronic absenteeism (absent 10% or more instructional days)

- Social studies
- Graduation rate
- College, career, and civic readiness index: taking advanced coursework, earning technical education certificates, etc.

- Out-of-school suspensions (beginning with 2018-19 results)
- Being ready for high school (once data becomes available)

2

## New York State wants to reduce testing time and improve the testing experience.



State tests in grades 3-8 English and math will be reduced from three to two days each.

95%

The law requires that 95% of students in each tested subgroup take the appropriate state tests. New York State will work with parents, schools, and districts to increase participation.



New York State will continue to translate state math and science tests into more languages, and when funding becomes available, will create a language arts tests in students' native languages.

3

New York State will help teachers and school leaders be ready for success and ensure that all students have access to an excellent educator.



The state will look at changes in how teachers and leaders are prepared to make sure they are ready on day one.



New York State has many excellent teachers. We will ensure that all schools have the ability to attract and keep them.

4

New York State is piloting a process to ask parents for additional help when their child's school is identified for improvement.



If your child's school is identified as low-performing ...



... then it will have to ask parents, teachers, and students how they think the school can do better ...



... and you will be able to participate in deciding how your school spends part of the federal money it receives to improve.

5

New York State will provide parents with a more complete picture of their child's school.



New public reports will show information on student test scores, graduation rates, and other outcomes for schools, districts, and the state, consistent with privacy laws.



The reports also will give information on things parents care deeply about, such as class size or opportunities for students to participate in the arts.



Parents will know how much each school is spending per student through the new reports.



The New York State Education Department will use the information in these reports to help districts adjust spending or come up with new ways to meet students' needs.