



Phoenix Central School District

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Judith A. Belfield
Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Phoenix Parent/Guardian,

We want everyone in our district to be informed of our instructional direction and intentions with the 3-8 NYS ELA and Math Assessments this spring. We continue to encourage all of our district staff, students, and parents to fully participate in the 3-8 NYS ELA and Math assessments.

The results from state assessments are an integral part of instruction. The results on the NYS Assessments help us to determine whether or not the goals of our instructional program are being met. We use assessments to measure how much our students have learned and to see if our students are meeting standards. Assessment results impact decisions about grades, placement in programs, instructional needs of individual students, the impact of our curriculum, and in many cases state and federal funding. PCSD receives federal funding through our Title grants. We are expected to have a 95% participation rate in the 3-8 NYS ELA and math assessments. Our Title I federal funding could be affected if our participation rate drops below 95%. Approximately 98% of our Title I funds are dedicated to salaries of teachers and support personnel.

Student participation and assessment results impact teachers and principals. Every classroom teacher and principal receives a growth score from the results of the 3-8 assessments. A Growth Score is part of each teacher and principal's annual professional performance evaluation. If a student does not take the test, it directly impacts and reduces the chance for that teacher and principal to receive a fair score towards their evaluation.

Student participation and assessment results impact schools and districts. When a student refuses to take a NYS assessment, the score is reported as an "invalid score" NOT as a "no score" for the test, which impacts a building Growth Score and accountability factors. Every "invalid score" counts against a school and district in regards to the "Student Participation Rate." All schools and districts must maintain a Student Participation Rate of at least 95%. All Schools and districts must also achieve performance scores for each student subgroup (male, female, general education, special education, and ethnicity groups). When either the participation or performance rate is not met for two years in a row, a school or district is then put on a state accountability list. If the school or district does not get off of that list (by maintaining a minimum participate rate of 95% and meeting annual performance measures) the NYS Education department requires districts and schools to create plans and conduct initiatives that impact local control over schools.

Despite rumors and movements that start to circulate this time of year, New York State does not have an approved "Opt Out" process for students who do not want to take the tests. In fact, all districts in NYS are legally required by the Federal Government to administer the 3-8 ELA and Math Assessments. Districts are not allowed to approve students to opt-out. Therefore, please be advised that all students in grades 3-8 in attendance during the assessment as well as the make-up dates, will be actively engaged in taking an assessment in the same classroom assessment environment as their peers. Students will NOT be provided an alternative setting, location, or activity. If they are not taking the NYS 3-8 ELA and Math Assessment they will be taking a regionally created ELA and Math Assessment that will be just as rigorous as the NYS 3 - 8 Math and ELA assessments.

We hope this explanation helps you to make a well-informed decision with supporting your child through the NYS 3-8 Assessments.

Thank you.
Sincerely,

Judith Belfield
Superintendent, Phoenix Central School District