



Deputy Commissioner
Office of Instructional Support
89 Washington Avenue – Room 875 EBA
Albany, New York 12234

Tel: (518)474-5915
Fax: (518)486-2233

March 2016

TO: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Public and Nonpublic Schools
Principals of Public and Nonpublic Schools
Leaders of Charter Schools

FROM: Angelica Infante, Deputy Commissioner
Office of Instructional Support

Peter Swerdzewski, Assistant Commissioner
Assessment, Standards, and Curriculum

SUBJECT: Transition to Allow Students Who are Productively Working to Continue to Test for the 2016 Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Tests

In the memorandum, “Changes for the 2016 Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Tests,” the New York State Education Department (NYSED) announced the transition to allow students who are productively working to continue working on their exams past the estimated testing times provided by NYSED for the 2016 Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Tests. This change was in response to extensive feedback from educators throughout the State about the inability of students to work at their own pace on the ELA and mathematics tests. This change will offer students further opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do by allowing them to work at their own pace.

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide additional guidance on the implementation of this policy.

Estimated Average Working Times

In general, the transition to this new approach to testing means that as long as students are productively working, they should be allowed as much time as they need within the confines of the regular school day to complete that day’s test booklet. For planning purposes only, below are estimated average times that most students will need to complete test sessions.

For ELA and mathematics, students are estimated to need the following amounts of time:

| ELA Grade | Estimated Testing Time |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Grades 3-4 | Approx. 60-70 mins. of working time each day per session |
| Grades 5-8 | Approx. 80-90 mins. of working time each day per session |

| Math Grade | Estimated Testing Time |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Grade 3 | Approx. 50-60 mins. of working time each day to complete sessions 1 and 2 Approx. 60-70 mins. of working time to complete session 3 |
| Grade 4 | Approx. 50-60 mins. of working time each day to complete sessions 1 and 2 Approx. 80-90 mins. of working time to complete session 3 |
| Grades 5-8 | Approx. 70-90 mins. of working time each day to complete sessions 1 and 2 Approx. 80-90 mins. of working time to complete session 3 |

Some students will take more or less time than the estimated averages provided above for both ELA and mathematics. Please plan accordingly to allow students who are productively working to complete the test at their own pace each day. The approximations provided above are an estimate that can be used for planning purposes only.

Students who finish the test before other students may check their work. When a student is ready, the test materials may be collected by the proctor. Once the student checks his or her work, or chooses not to, test materials may be collected by the proctor. After a student's test materials are collected, that student may be permitted to read silently. This privilege is granted at the discretion of each school. No talking and no other schoolwork is permitted. Once all students complete the test, you may end the session.

Given that the spring 2016 tests have no time limits, schools and districts have the discretion to create their own approach to ensure that all students who are productively working are given the time they need to continue to take the tests. If the test is administered in a large-group setting, school administrators may prefer to allow students to hand in their test materials as they finish and then leave the room. If so, ensure that students leave the room as quietly as possible so as not to disturb the students who are still working on the test.

Testing Accommodations – Extended Time

Because the 2016 ELA and mathematics tests are untimed, the accommodation of extended time will in essence be available to all students including all students with disabilities and English Language Learners. However, students with disabilities who have flexibility in scheduling, such as breaks at specified intervals, indicated as an accommodation in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Accommodation Plans (504 Plans) must be provided such accommodation.

Supervised Lunch Breaks

It is recommended that schools schedule the test sessions either at the start of the school day or immediately after lunch so that most students will have a sufficient block of time to complete each test session. It is further recommended that schools group together for testing those students who are expected to require more time to complete a test session than the pre-lunch or post-lunch block of time provides. Schools may arrange for such students to have a carefully supervised lunch break during any of the test sessions if necessary. The test materials should be collected from the students prior to the start of the lunch break and returned to those who had not completed the test following the supervised lunch break. The school may permit these students to talk with each other and with the supervising adults during the lunch break but must be instructed that they may not discuss the test content during this time. So that their tests will not have to be invalidated, the proctor should **not** return the test materials to any students who during the lunch break violated the instruction not to discuss the test content.

Limitations in Timing

As long as they are working productively, students should be allowed as much time as they need only within the confines of the regular school day to complete each test session. Schools are not expected to extend the school day in order for students to complete a test session. In addition, schools may not extend a test session beyond its scheduled day unless the student has multiple-day testing as a specified testing accommodation in his or her IEP or 504 Plan.

The transition to untimed testing is just one of the efforts that NYSED is making to improve the quality of the State's assessments and the experience that students have when taking these tests. We appreciate all that schools do to help put these changes into practice.

For questions and guidance on how to implement this new policy, schools and districts are asked to contact their regional District Superintendent's office. District Superintendents will provide the technical guidance and support to help ensure their member districts are able to carry out this new policy within their unique local and regional constraints.

| District Superintendent Office | Phone Number |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Broome-Delaware-Tioga Counties and BOCES | (607) 766-3802 |

Questions about testing programs, policies, and procedures may be sent to emscassessinfo@nysed.gov