



Assistant Commissioner  
Office of State Assessment

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**TO:** Principals of Public, Religious, and Independent Schools  
Leaders of Charter Schools

**FROM:** Steven E. Katz *Steven E. Katz*

**SUBJECT:** Procedures for Requesting, Shipping, and Storing of Materials for the Spring 2021 Administration of the New York State Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Tests and Information on Computer-Based Testing for Spring 2021

This memorandum provides information concerning Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics testing program and procedures for requesting, shipping, and storing materials for the Spring 2021 Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Tests.

As the 2020-21 school year gets underway, NYSED and the Board of Regents continue to make our primary focus the physical and mental health, safety, and well-being of the children and adults in our schools. We continue to be mindful of the many uncertainties faced statewide and nationally, and we will continuously monitor the situation and provide updated guidance, as the situation requires.

This will include NYSED and the Board of Regents closely monitoring the feasibility and fairness of administering the Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Tests next spring. At this time, no final decision regarding the 2021 Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Tests has been made. Keeping this in mind, we are sharing the following information as a means to prepare should it be deemed feasible to proceed with the Spring 2021 test administrations in person in schools throughout the State.

This [memorandum](#) and all information in subsequent e-mailings pertaining to these tests, will be available on the Department's website. Important telephone and fax numbers for the Office of State Assessment (OSA) are listed on page 8 of this memorandum.

All editions of the Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Tests must be requested through the Department's [online examination request system](https://portal.nysed.gov/abp) (<https://portal.nysed.gov/abp>). Directions for using the online examination request system are included in this memorandum and in the *Instructions for Submitting Requests for Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Tests* (DET 902).

You will receive a separate memorandum providing information concerning the procedures for the requesting, shipping, and storing of materials for the Grades 4 and 8 Science Tests.

### Notifications for the 2021 Administration

Online requests for all Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Tests must be submitted by **December 11, 2020**. Schools must submit examination requests under their own BEDS code. Requests for two or more schools in a district must **not** be combined into one request. This is of the utmost importance when it comes to computer-based testing (CBT) because student information is downloaded into Nextera Admin based on the BEDS code of the school that placed the request.

In response to COVID-19 related school and district closures that occurred during the 2019-20 school year and the subsequent suspension of the 2020 Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Operational Tests and Stand-Alone Field Tests, only those schools that were approved to administer the 2020 Grades 3-8 ELA and/or Mathematics Operational Tests by CBT may administer the 2021 Grades 3-8 ELA and/or Mathematics Operational Tests by CBT. These approved schools may choose to administer any content area and grade level of the 2021 operational tests by CBT.

To provide greater flexibility for schools, this year there will be two CBT Simulation Periods. Each simulation period will have a window during which schools planning to administer operational tests with CBT will participate on the day(s) they choose. The first CBT Simulation Period will be held from December 9 - 11, 2020. The second CBT Simulation Period will be held from January 12 – January 14, 2021. Approved schools may have their students participate in as many of the days of simulations as they choose but schools must take part in a simulation on at least one day of either of the two Simulation Periods in order to participate in operational tests with CBT in spring 2021. The operational test request will be converted to paper-based testing (PBT) if a school that requested operational testing with CBT fails to participate in a simulation on at least one day of either of these two CBT Simulation Periods. Please see page 5 for more information.

The Grades 3-8 Mathematics Tests will now be available in three additional languages: Arabic, Bengali, and Chinese (Simplified). These languages will be available in PBT format only. They will not be available in CBT format. Chinese (Traditional), Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish editions of the mathematics tests will continue to be available in both PBT and CBT format.

Being mindful of the variability statewide in the manner that instruction is being provided to students across the State in response to COVID-19, NYSED is carefully considering providing schools much more flexibility than had been necessary in past years in the local scheduling of the spring 2021 operational tests. More information about such flexibility will be provided as the test administration grows nearer in time and the situation demands.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

All operational tests must be requested through the Department's online examination request system. Online requests for all Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Tests must be submitted by **December 11, 2020**. Schools must submit examination requests under their own BEDS code. Requests for two or more schools in a district must **not** be combined into one request. Within three business days after your school request has been entered, you will be sent a confirmation notice, via e-mail, indicating the format, number of students being tested, number of printed tests being shipped, and the address to which they will be shipped. Principals are reminded to carefully check all e-mail confirmation notices in order to ensure that they accurately reflect selection of PBT versus CBT format, the correct quantities of materials to be shipped, and to determine whether or not additional materials are needed.

Once you have logged onto the online examination request system, you will first indicate your school's preference for computer-based or paper-based *field testing*. All schools may elect to administer the field tests with CBT, regardless of the school's eligibility to administer the 2021 operational tests with CBT. Next, if applicable, you will indicate if your school will be requesting any *operational* CBT tests. These

approved schools may choose to administer any content area and grade level of the 2021 operational tests by CBT. All schools are encouraged to administer the stand-alone field tests (SAFTs) by CBT.

Approved schools, as per the above “Notifications,” requesting operational CBT tests must then select the CBT Simulation Period(s) that their school will participate in and the name of their scoring consortium’s Lead Scoring Entity. Schools may change their selections up until the closing of the online examination request system on December 11, 2020.

Next, you will proceed to the operational test requesting section where you will be able to indicate each grade for the selected content area that your school will be administering by PBT or CBT. (The default is PBT.) Then enter the quantities of tests needed by your school. You will find several help messages throughout the system to assist you in submitting your school’s online examination request. Be sure to read all the help messages.

Administrators who find that they need additional test materials for any of the tests may return to the online examination request system in order to revise or to add any supplemental quantities needed up until the closing of the online examination request system on December 11, 2020. Administrators who wish to make a change to their selection of PBT or CBT format for either the operational or stand-alone field tests may do so using the online examination request system until December 11, 2020. Telephone requests will not be accepted. After any updates or changes are made to a school’s request, an updated confirmation notice will be e-mailed to the principal.

Administrators who find that they need additional ELA or mathematics test materials after the December 11, 2020 deadline or who have questions concerning the shipment of test materials should please contact the Department’s contractor, Questar Assessment, Inc., (Questar) directly at [ny.3-8.help@questarai.com](mailto:ny.3-8.help@questarai.com) or at 866-997-0695.

All schools administering New York State tests by PBT must contract with a Regional Information Center (RIC) or large-city scanning center in order to obtain answer sheets and scanning services. Schools administering the tests by CBT must contract with a RIC or large-city scanning center to obtain test results at the conclusion of testing. When requesting tests on the online examination request system, schools must verify the RIC or large-city scanning center with which they have contracted. A complete [list of RICs and large-city scanning centers](#) is available on the Department’s website.

## **GRADES 3-8 ELA AND MATHEMATICS OPERATIONAL TESTING**

In response to COVID-19 related school and district closures that occurred during the 2019-20 school year and the subsequent suspension of the 2020 Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Operational Tests and Stand-Alone Field Tests, only those schools that were approved to administer the 2020 Grades 3-8 ELA and/or Mathematics Operational Tests by CBT may elect to administer the 2021 Grades 3-8 ELA and/or Mathematics Operational Tests by CBT. These approved schools may choose to administer any content area and grade level of the 2021 operational tests by CBT.

For the operational tests administered to all students during the statewide testing administration window, schools will select, subject to the above restriction, a format (PBT or CBT) for each grade and content area for each test administered. If a school is testing a grade with CBT, all students in that grade must test by CBT. The only exceptions are to provide an oral translation or alternate language PBT edition for those English Language Learners for whom a translated CBT edition is not available from the Department, or pursuant to a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Accommodation Plan (504 Plan).

## STUDENTS TO BE TESTED

Except as noted below, all public and charter school students in Grades 3 through 8 must take all State tests administered for their grade level. This includes students who have been retained in these grades. The chronological ages of students with disabilities who are ungraded should be used to determine who must be tested and which [grade-level tests](#) they must take.

When determining which students will be participating in these tests, be sure to consider those students who attend programs outside of the school. BOCES-operated, religious, independent, and charter schools within New York State providing special education programs for students placed there by public school districts should submit requests in order to cover the students enrolled in their programs. Public schools should *not* request test materials for students enrolled in such special education placements but should confer with the special education programs in order to ensure that they will be requesting the tests that will be needed.

- **The Grade 8 Mathematics Test.** Grade 8 students who are receiving instruction in a commencement-level mathematics course and who take a Regents Examination in mathematics are not required to take the Grade 8 Mathematics Test. School districts are allowed to administer only the Regents Examination in mathematics to these students, eliminating the need for students accelerated in mathematics to take both tests.
- **English Language Learners (ELLs).** Part 154 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education requires that the language arts proficiency of all ELLs be tested annually. All ELLs, regardless of grade, must take the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). Instructions for requesting the NYSESLAT are e-mailed separately to schools.
  - Schools are permitted to exempt from the 2021 Grades 3–8 ELA Tests only those ELLs (including those from Puerto Rico) who, on April 1, 2021, will have been attending school in the United States for the first time for less than one year. Recently arrived ELLs may be eligible *for one, and only one, exemption* from the administration of the Grades 3–8 ELA Tests. Subject to this limitation, schools may administer the NYSESLAT in lieu of the Grades 3–8 ELA Tests to recently arrived ELLs who meet the criterion above. All other ELLs must participate in the Grades 3–8 ELA Tests, as well as in the NYSESLAT.
  - All ELLs are required to participate in the State’s mathematics tests. ELLs may take the mathematics tests in English or in an alternate language, whichever is better for the student. If you are requesting alternate language editions of the test in Chinese (Traditional), Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and/or Spanish, these students will receive the alternate language edition of the test in the same format, computer or paper, that you selected for the regular English editions. If you are requesting alternate language editions of the test in Arabic, Bengali, and/or Chinese (Simplified), your school will receive paper copies of the tests for these students. These editions are not available in computer format. The printed test booklets may also be translated orally into other languages for those ELLs whose first language is one for which a written translation is not available from the Department. (See “Test Read Booklets” on page 7.) Schools are permitted to offer ELLs specific testing accommodations when taking these tests. These accommodations are detailed in the respective test manuals.
- **Former English Language Learners (ELLs).** Schools may provide the testing accommodations available to ELLs to Former ELLs who met the exiting criteria specified in Part 154-2 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education and were exited from ELL status following their participation in one of the two most recent administrations of the NYSESLAT. Such students either achieved an overall level of Commanding on the spring 2018 or spring 2019 administration of the NYSESLAT or achieved an overall level of Expanding on the most recent administration of the NYSESLAT and scored at Level 3 or higher on the New York State Grades 3–8 ELA Tests during that same school year.

These accommodations may not be provided to Former ELLs who achieved the exiting criteria through NYSESLAT administration more than two administrations of the NYSESLAT ago. [Additional guidance](#) on the identification of Former ELLs is available on the Department's website.

- **Students with Disabilities.** The Committee on Special Education (CSE) must decide for each student, on a case-by-case basis, whether or not the student will participate in the general State test or in the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) for students with severe cognitive disabilities. The CSE's decision must be documented in the student's IEP. The criteria that the CSE must use to determine eligibility for the NYSAA is available on the Department's website.

## **OPERATIONAL TESTING VIA CBT**

All approved schools that select CBT for any operational tests will be required to verify their technology readiness. Please note that public schools must also collaborate with their district in order to ensure that the school will be prepared to meet the district's technology requirements for CBT. The 2021 Grades 3-8 tests in large type and braille will be available as PBT only. Alternative language tests (mathematics only) in Chinese (Traditional), Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish will be available as CBT. Arabic, Bengali, and Chinese (Simplified) alternate language tests will be available as PBT only. The information below provides additional details for your school to consider prior to placing your school's request.

### **CBT Simulations**

This year there will be two CBT Simulation Periods. Each simulation period will have a window during which approved schools planning to administer operational tests with CBT will participate on the day(s) they choose. The first CBT Simulation Period will be held from December 9 – December 11, 2020. The second CBT Simulation Period will be held from January 12 – January 14, 2021. Schools select the CBT Simulation Period(s) that their school will participate in when they request operational CBT for the ELA and/or Mathematics Tests in the online examination request system. Schools may change their selection up until the closing of the online examination request system on December 11, 2020.

The simulations enable schools to test the performance of the Questar Secure Browser within the school's network and to identify any improvements the school can make to streamline operational CBT testing procedures this spring. This year, actual student data will be used for the simulations. The use of actual student data will provide the most accurate live testing experience possible in preparation for operational testing. Please work with your RIC or large-city scanning center to ensure that your school meets all requirements regarding student data for the simulations.

To participate in operational CBT, schools are required to take part in at least one day of CBT simulation during either of the two CBT Simulation Periods. The operational test request will be converted to PBT if a school that requested operational testing with CBT fails to participate in a simulation on at least one day of either of these two CBT Simulation Periods. Additional information concerning the steps necessary to prepare for the simulations will be provided to participating schools. All schools planning to participate in operational CBT should be in communication with their RICs or districts to start preparing early for the simulations.

### **Technology Readiness Verification**

The Department will be distributing information about the process for schools to verify their technology readiness, which means confirming that the school has enough devices and bandwidth, as well as other considerations, to participate in operational CBT. To ensure that all schools are prepared for successful administration of the spring 2021 operational tests, those approved schools that choose the CBT format for operational tests must verify their technology readiness. Any school that fails to submit its verification of technology readiness by December 30, 2020 will have its CBT examination request(s) converted to PBT. All devices for CBT will need to have the Questar Secure Browser downloaded to them ahead of the

test administration period. Details about the Questar Secure Browser can be found in the [Nextera Setup and Installation Guide](#) on the Department's CBT Support website. Approved schools planning to administer operational tests with CBT should visit the CBT website to review the Nextera Setup and Installation Guide. Any questions regarding this guidance should be sent to [cbtsupport@nysed.gov](mailto:cbtsupport@nysed.gov). The Department will provide specific communication as to when schools should begin to prepare for CBT through installation of the Questar Secure Browser. [Additional information](#) concerning CBT is available online.

## Scoring of Computer-Entered Student Responses

Access to Questar's ScorePoint computer-based scoring system will be provided at no charge to those schools/districts that participate in operational CBT, as well as to BOCES and large-city district regional scoring centers and private contractors. ScorePoint must be used to score all constructed responses for operational CBT.

To participate in operational CBT, the school/district must arrange for its students' computer-entered constructed responses to be scored by a consortium of teachers from a minimum of three schools collaborating under the direction of a Lead Scoring Entity. The Lead Scoring Entity can be a school, district, BOCES, or scoring vendor. Note that teachers may score computer-entered student responses as part of the scoring consortium regardless of whether or not their school administered operational CBT. Scoring models permitted by the Department for CBT scoring using ScorePoint are strictly limited to: Regional Scoring, Three or More Schools from Two Districts, Three or More Schools Within a District, and Private Contractors (Third-Party Vendors).

For CBT scoring, no teacher will score assessments from their own school. All grades in a content area must be scored by the same Scoring Consortium; however, a school may use a different Scoring Consortium to score its CBT ELA Tests than it is using to score its Mathematics Tests.

## REQUESTING EXAMINATION MATERIALS

### Username and Passwords

You must have a username and password in order to enter your school's examination requests online. If you were the principal of the same school during the 2019–20 school year, the expectation is that you have previously been issued a valid username and password. Use those to log onto the online examination request system. Telephone examination requests will not be accepted.

If you were the principal of the same school during the 2019–20 school year, but you have forgotten your password or you need to reset your password, access the "Reset Password" utility available at <http://portal.nysed.gov>. More information on this utility may be obtained from the Department's Delegated Account System (SEDDAS) [Help Desk](#).

If you are a new principal and do not have a valid username and password, determine which of the following situations applies to you.

- **Principals of New York City Public Schools:** Contact your Borough Assessment Implementation Director (BAID) at your Borough Assessment Office (BAO).
- **Principals of Public Schools or BOCES Programs Located Outside of New York City:** Contact your School Superintendent or Delegated Administrator to obtain your username and password.
- **Principals of Religious, Independent, and Charter Schools:** Contact the Department's Delegated Account System (SEDDAS) [Help Desk](#) to obtain your username and password. If you are a new principal for your school and have not yet done so, you must notify the Department's Office of Information and Reporting Services via e-mail to [datasupport@nysed.gov](mailto:datasupport@nysed.gov) that you are the new principal. This notice must be written on school letterhead stationery and must include your school's

BEDS Code, your full name, your e-mail address and phone number, the effective date of change, and the signature of the current superintendent or principal.

All questions regarding usernames and passwords for public schools should be directed to your Delegated Administrator in your local school district or, for religious, independent, and charter schools, the [SEDDAS Help Desk](#).

## REQUESTING AND PACKING INFORMATION FOR PRINTED TEST MATERIALS

- *Regular Test Booklets:* Request the number of test booklets needed by your school. Test booklets for ELA and mathematics are shipped in packages of 10 and 25. Enter the number of students who will be tested with regular test materials, *not* the number of packages of booklets. You may request up to 5% above current enrollment to allow for possible changes in enrollment. If you try to request more than that amount, you will receive an error message. If you get an error message and need to request more than that amount, please e-mail [examrequest@nysed.gov](mailto:examrequest@nysed.gov) for assistance.
- *Braille and Large-Type Test Materials:* Because of the expense incurred by the Department in the production of braille and large-type tests, request the **exact number** of braille and large-type test materials needed for students whose IEP or 504 Plan specifically requires either of these accommodations.
- *Test Read Booklets:* Regular edition tests are spiraled such that the students in a school will be testing on different forms. When placing requests, schools will be asked to enter the *total* number of students who have the accommodation of Test Read. When placing requests for the mathematics tests, also enter the number of students who require an oral translation of a lower incidence language in the “Test Read” total. Schools will receive tests for these students in packets of two, one for the student and one for the proctor reading the test to the student or providing an oral translation, in order to ensure that the student and the proctor will have the same test form. Note that all “Test Read” booklets are the same form.
- *Alternative Language Test Editions (Mathematics Only):* For all languages, request the **exact number** of tests needed. Spanish paper editions are shipped in packages of 10 and 25. All alternative language edition tests are the same form. Schools will receive paper copies of English editions of the tests in the same form to provide as a testing accommodation to ELLs making use of an alternative language edition with PBT and CBT.
- *Answer Sheets:* The Department does *not* provide answer sheets. All schools administering one or more grades with PBT must make arrangements with a RIC or large-city scanning center to receive answer sheets for students testing with PBT.

## STORAGE OF SECURE TEST MATERIALS

The printed secure ELA and mathematics tests must be stored in the safe or vault of the building to which the tests will be shipped. All secure test materials must be placed in the storage location as soon as they are received. Access to the test materials must be restricted in order to ensure that test security is maintained.

If the building where the tests will be administered does not have a safe or vault large enough to hold the ELA or mathematics tests, arrangements must be made to store these tests at a school or district location with an appropriate safe or vault. If you indicate that your school’s tests will be stored at an alternate storage location other than the one indicated in the shipping information on the School Information page when requesting tests via the online examination request system, you will be required to complete the *Examination Storage Plan* form, found on the online examination request system, and fax or email it to OSA. Tests stored at such a location must not be transferred to the school where the tests will be administered until the day scheduled for the administration of that part of the test.

Secure test materials may not be removed from any secure storage location until the day scheduled for the administration of each part of the test, except during the inventory of test materials when the test shipment is received. The shrink-wrapped packages of secure test materials must not be opened during the inventory. All secure test materials must remain sealed until the initial test administration date.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For questions regarding the requesting, storing, and administering of the New York State Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics Tests and information on Computer-Based Testing, please call the Operations Group at 518-474-8220.

For other questions regarding State assessments, please call OSA's main number at 518-474-5900. OSA's e-mail address is [emscassessinfo@nysed.gov](mailto:emscassessinfo@nysed.gov).

Online requests for all Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Tests must be submitted by December 11, 2020. After December 11, 2020, please contact Questar Assessment, Inc. (Questar) via e-mail at [ny.3-8.help@questarai.com](mailto:ny.3-8.help@questarai.com) for additional requests.

Faxes regarding test administration may be sent to 518-474-1989.

Additional information regarding CBT specific questions is available at <http://cbtsupport.nysed.gov>.