



BUREAU CHIEF
Office of State Assessment

May 2021

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

FROM: Clara DeSorbo *Clara DeSorbo*

SUBJECT: Spring 2021 Grade 4 Elementary-Level and Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Tests

This memorandum provides information concerning the shipping, storing, and administration of materials for the Grade 4 Elementary-Level and Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Tests. Additional [information](#) on these tests is available on the Department's website. If you have any questions about the information in this memorandum, you may contact the Office of State Assessment (OSA). Important telephone and fax numbers for OSA are listed on the last page of this memorandum. Please also see the note regarding the 2021 Elementary- and Intermediate-Level Stand-Alone Field Tests on page 8.

The New York State Education Department (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. On February 12, 2021, NYSED submitted a formal request to the United States Department of Education (USDE) to waive state testing requirements at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. On April 7, 2021, NYSED was deeply disappointed to learn that the USDE denied the Department's assessment waiver request. Therefore, the spring 2021 tests will be administered but with additional flexibility NYSED is providing to schools.

In recognition of the variability in the manner that instruction is being provided to students across the State in response to COVID-19, the Spring 2021 Grades 4 and 8 Science Tests will be comprised of the single-session Written Tests only. There will not be a Performance Test component to these tests this school year. The Performance Test will not be made available for optional administration for local student assessment purposes only.

The 2020-21 Elementary- and Intermediate-Level Testing Schedule, posted on the Department's website, has been amended to reflect that schools will have five school days to administer the Grades 4 and 8 Science Written Tests this school year.

Dates for the Spring 2021 Grades 4 and 8 Science Written Tests

Test	Administration Dates	Scoring Dates
Grades 4 and 8 Science Written Tests	Monday, June 7 – Friday, June 11	Following administration, but no later than Thursday, June 17

The additional flexibility that will be available to schools for the Spring 2021 administration of the Grades 4 and 8 Science Tests is as follows:

- The Department has determined that it will not be possible to administer any of this year's State assessments remotely, assessments will be "school-based" and "in-person."
- Schools are not expected to bring students into the building to participate in the tests if the students are receiving entirely remote instruction during the testing windows. However, to assist in scheduling, NYSED suggests that schools consider contacting parents of students receiving entirely remote instruction to advise them of the testing schedule and ascertain the parent's interest in having their child come to school to participate in the test. Schools that are entirely remote during the entire testing window are not expected to re-open for the sole purpose of administering the science tests.
- For students who are unable to participate in the Written Test due to receiving entirely remote instruction during the entire testing window, schools will report this by marking the field "receiving entirely remote instruction" on the student's answer sheet.
- Schools will have the option to administer the tests to students over the full duration of the testing window to accommodate instructional schedules.
- Schools will be allowed to administer the science tests to students who are receiving hybrid instruction on the days that they are ordinarily attending school in person. Schools will not be required to test the entire grade on the same school day.
- Public school districts are not required to have a uniform testing schedule for all of the schools in the district.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

The [2021 New York State Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test Manual for Administrators and Teachers](#) and the [2021 New York State Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test Manual for Administrators and Teachers](#) provide information needed for the administration of the Written Tests and are available on the Department's website. Each school will receive one printed copy of the Grade 8 manual with their shipment of printed test materials. Due to the timing of when schools' exam requests were packed, schools will receive one printed copy of the Grade 4 manual in a separate UPS shipment that will be delivered to schools starting on Monday, May 24.

All teachers who assist in the administration and scoring of the Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test or the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test are expected to sign the Deputy and Proctor Certificate and the Test Scoring Certificate contained within the New York State Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test Manual for Administrators and Teachers and the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test Manual for Administrators and Teachers. Principals are required to sign the Test Scoring Certificate and to complete and sign the Test Storage Certificate, also found within the test manuals. These three certificates, as well as student answer papers, must be retained on file in the school for one year.

DELIVERY OF TEST MATERIALS:

Except as noted above for the Grade 4 manual, the supply of Written Test materials for your school will be sent in one shipment for each grade. Shipments will be delivered by UPS and may arrive at any time between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Please be sure that someone is available in your school

or approved storage location during those hours to accept the shipments. Should any problems occur in connection with the delivery of test materials, please call this office immediately.

Dates for the Delivery of Test Materials to Schools

Test	Delivery Dates
Grades 4 and 8 Science Written Tests	Wednesday, June 2 – Friday, June 4

Schools that do not receive their shipment of secure test materials by 9:00 a.m. on Friday, June 4 should track the shipment of test materials on the Internet.

- Go to <http://www.ups.com/tracking/tracking.html>.
- Click “Track by Reference.”
- In the Shipment Reference field, type the BEDS code of the school where you indicated you wanted your tests to be shipped.
- Enter the Ship Date Range. (The initial ship date is Tuesday, June 1.)
- If you are unable to track your shipment or notice some other irregularity, contact OSA.

OBTAINING TEST MATERIALS FROM REGIONAL CENTERS:

School administrators who need to obtain Grade 4 Elementary-Level or Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Written Tests that were not originally requested should contact the Department’s Operations Group. Under the direction of the Operations Group, school administrators should contact the official in charge of their regional center to arrange for pickup of test materials. Information on [regional centers](#) is available on the Department’s website.

The person sent to pick up an emergency supply of test materials from a regional center must present authorization written on school letterhead and signed by the principal that lists the materials to be picked up and authorizes the person to pick up those materials. The person obtaining test materials must provide photo identification and must countersign the authorization letter and leave it with the official in charge of the regional center. Test materials may be picked up from the regional centers only on the scheduled date for the administration of the test.

SCORING MATERIALS:

The Department does not provide printed copies of the Scoring Keys and Rating Guides for the Written Tests. Instead, the Scoring Keys and Rating Guides for the Written Tests will be posted on the Department’s website. Schools must print sufficient copies to supply one to each rater. The Scoring Keys and Rating Guides for the Written Tests will be posted on the afternoon of Friday, June 11.

SCORING OF THE GRADE 4 AND GRADE 8 SCIENCE TESTS:

Teachers are not permitted to score their own students’ answer papers.

SECURITY OF TEST MATERIALS:

As soon as each shipment of test materials arrives at the school or other approved storage location, the principal should conduct an inventory to verify that all materials indicated on the shipping notice have been received. School officials who determine that some materials are missing from their shipment of Grade 4 Elementary-Level or Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test materials must contact OSA via

fax to obtain these materials. Shrink-wrapped secure test materials must not be opened until the day the test is scheduled to be administered. Except for taking inventory of the test shipment, schools must keep all test materials in a secure location.

The principal of each school requesting tests is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for safeguarding the materials received by the school. The secure location where test materials are being stored should be checked daily to ensure that the test materials have not been tampered with and remain secure. The combination or key to the secure location must be maintained under strict security conditions to preclude access to the test materials by students and other unauthorized persons.

All Written Test booklets, both used and unused, and all used answer sheets must be held secure from the date that the school receives its shipment of test materials until 3:00 p.m. on Friday, June 11, 2021. At that time, the Written Test materials are no longer considered secure. No test materials need to be returned to the Department this year.

USE OF COMMUNICATIONS DEVICES:

All students are prohibited from bringing cell phones and certain other personal electronic devices into a classroom or other location where a State test is being administered. Test proctors and school officials shall retain the right to collect and hold any prohibited electronic devices prior to the start of the test administration. Admission to the test shall be denied to any student who is in possession of a cell phone or other prohibited electronic device and refuses to relinquish it.

STUDENTS TO BE TESTED:

Except as noted below, all public and charter school students in Grade 4 and Grade 8 must take the State assessments administered for their grade level. This includes students who have been retained in these grades. Religious and independent schools are strongly encouraged to administer these tests to their students in accordance with these same provisions. The birthdates of ungraded students should be used to determine who must be tested. For more information on ungraded students, see Appendix VI in the [Grade 4 test manual](#) or Appendix VII in the [Grade 8 test manual](#). When determining which students will be participating in these tests, be sure to consider students who attend programs operated by the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) as well as any other programs located outside the school.

Grade 8 Accelerated Students

The Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test should be administered to students in the grade in which they will have received instruction in all of the material in the Intermediate-Level Science Core Curriculum (5–8). While this is typically Grade 8, the test may also be administered to students in Grade 7 who will have received instruction in all of the material in the Intermediate-Level Science Core Curriculum (5–8) and are being considered for placement in an accelerated high school-level science course when they are in Grade 8. The school may not use this assessment to retest any students who participated in this assessment last school year while in Grade 7. Schools are required to administer this assessment to students in Grade 8 who did not take this assessment in Grade 7 unless they will be taking a Regents Examination in science or being given an exemption from such Regents Examination at the end of this school year.

Principals have the discretion to either require or waive the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test for accelerated Grade 8 students who did not take this exam during the last school year but who will be taking a Regents Exam in science at the end of this school year. For accelerated students for whom the school

waives the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test, their achievement in science will be measured by their performance on the Regents Examination in science.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities must participate in the Grade 4 Elementary-Level and Grade 8 Intermediate-Level science tests unless a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), as developed by the Committee on Special Education (CSE), specifically indicates that the student should take the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) for students with severe disabilities. The criteria that the CSE must use to determine eligibility for the NYSAA are available on the Department's website.

English Language Learners

All English Language Learners (ELLs) are required to participate in the Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test and the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test. They may take the tests in either an alternative language or in English, whichever would be better for the student. Translated editions of the Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test and the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test are provided in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish. These tests may be translated orally into other languages for ELLs whose first language is one for which a written translation is not available from the Department. Schools are permitted to offer ELLs specific testing accommodations when taking these tests. (See page 6.)

TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS:

Students Who Incur Disabilities Shortly Before Test Administration

Principals may provide accommodations when testing general education students who incur an injury (e.g., a broken arm) or experience the onset of a short- or long-term disability acquired or diagnosed within 30 days prior to the administration of State assessments. In such cases, when sufficient time is not available for the development of an IEP or a 504 Plan, principals may authorize certain accommodations that will not significantly change the skills being tested. These accommodations are limited to:

- extending the time limit for a test,
- administering the test in a special location,
- recording the student's answers in any manner, and
- reading the test to the student (only for students whose vision is impaired).

Eligibility for these accommodations is based on the principal's professional discretion, but the principal may confer with members of the CSE or with other school personnel in making this determination. Prior permission need not be obtained from the Department to authorize testing accommodations for general education students. However, a full written report concerning each authorization must be sent to OSA via fax. The report must be on school letterhead, must be signed by the principal, and must include the following information:

- the title of the test,
- a brief description of the student's injury or disability, and
- a listing of the accommodations that were authorized by the principal.
- If the student is expected to continue to need testing accommodations, the principal must immediately make the appropriate referral for the consideration of an IEP or 504 Plan.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities must be provided with the testing accommodations specified in their IEP or 504 Plans when taking these tests. It is the principal's responsibility to ensure that this occurs and that all staff members who will be providing these testing accommodations are appropriately trained. Plan all necessary arrangements for implementing testing accommodations well in advance of the test date.

The Department's Office of Special Education provides additional information on test access and accommodations for students with disabilities on its website. If you have questions on this topic for which you are unable to find answers on the website, you may contact the Office of Special Education via e-mail to speced@nysed.gov.

English Language Learners

Schools may provide the following testing accommodations to ELLs:

- **Time Extension:** Schools may extend the test time for ELLs. Principals may use any reasonable extensions, such as "time and a half" (the required testing time plus one-half of that amount of time), in accordance with their best judgment about the needs of the ELLs. Principals should consult with each student's classroom teacher in making these determinations.
- **Separate Location:** Schools are encouraged to provide optimal testing environments and facilities for all students. They may administer State tests to ELLs individually or in small groups in a separate location.
- **Bilingual Dictionaries and Glossaries:** ELLs may use bilingual dictionaries and glossaries when taking State exams in science. The bilingual dictionaries and glossaries may provide only direct translations of words. Bilingual dictionaries or glossaries that provide definitions or explanations are not permitted.
- **Simultaneous Use of English and Translated Editions:** For State exams in science, ELLs may use both an English and a translated edition of the test simultaneously. However, they should be instructed to record all of their responses in only one of the two editions. The translated edition used by the student should be so indicated on the student's answer sheet.
- **Oral Translation for Lower Incidence Languages:** Schools may provide ELLs with an oral translation of a State exam in science when there is no translated edition provided by the Department. All translations must be oral, direct translations of the English editions. Written translations are not allowed. No clarifications or explanations may be provided. The translator should receive a copy of the English edition of the test one hour prior to administration. The Department's Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (518-474-8775) and the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks (RBERNs) can assist schools in locating suitable translators. A list of RBERNs is available on the Department's website.
- **Writing Responses in the Native Language:** ELLs may write their responses to the open-ended questions on science tests in their native language. Scoring the tests is the responsibility of the school. However, the Department's Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies and the RBERNs can assist schools in locating persons who can translate the students' responses into English to facilitate scoring of the answer papers.

Former English Language Learners

Schools may provide the testing accommodations listed above under the heading "English Language Learners" 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 (Spring 2018 or Spring 2019) of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). Such students either achieved an overall level of Commanding on 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 English Language Arts Test.

These accommodations may not be provided to Former ELLs who achieved the exiting criteria through achievement on a NYSESLAT administration prior to Spring 2018. Additional guidance on identification of Former ELLs is available on the Department’s website.

REPORTING ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING IRREGULARITIES TO THE DEPARTMENT:

The building principal is responsible for all aspects of the school’s test administration and must take appropriate measures both to prevent, as much as possible, and to investigate all security breaches and irregularities associated with the administration and scoring of the Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test and the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test. In addition, the principal must report the following testing irregularities and misconduct by students, on school letterhead and signed by the principal, to OSA via fax or by e-mail.

- All student infractions of the Department’s policy prohibiting the possession or use of cell phones and other communications devices during State tests.
- All confirmed cases of students cheating.
- All interruptions of test sessions including those caused by power outages or fire alarms.
- All instances in which a State test is administered without Department authorization on a date outside the published statewide administration or makeup schedule.
- All instances in which scorers do not rate State tests in accordance with the scoring materials provided by the Department.
- All cases in which student test books or answer sheets are lost prior to either the scoring of the tests or submission of the answer sheets to the RIC or large-city scanning center.
- All instances of school officials or staff members providing students with other nonstandard test administrations, unrelated to cheating.

The report must include:

- The school’s BEDS Code,
- The name and grade level of the test,
- A brief description of the incident,
- The number of students affected, and
- The New York State Student Identification System (NYSSIS) ID numbers or local ID numbers of affected students.

MANDATORY REPORTING OF TESTING IMPROPRIETIES BY ADULTS:

The Department’s Test Security Unit (TSU) handles all reports of testing improprieties by adults involved in the administration and scoring of State tests. School officials and personnel are required to report any incident of testing misconduct by an educator or other adult involved in testing. Reports should be made via the TSU website by submitting the incident report form located on the main page under “Report Educator Test Fraud.”

Examples of Improper Testing Reported to the TSU

- All suspected or confirmed cases of a school official or staff member giving aid or impromptu lessons on specific test content to students immediately before or during a State test or altering student responses on a test paper.
- All cases in which a school official does not adhere to the Department policy concerning the finality of test scores as determined by the teacher scoring committees. This policy is explained on page 38 of New York State Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test Manual for Administrators

and Teachers and on page 20 of the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test Manual for Administrators and Teachers.

- All instances of an administrator or teacher instructing another administrator or teacher to alter or interfere with a student's test score.

ONLINE SUBMISSION OF TEACHER EVALUATIONS OF THE TEST TO THE DEPARTMENT:

Suggestions and feedback from teachers are an important contribution to the test development process. The Department provides an online evaluation form for State assessments where teachers may respond to several specific questions and may make suggestions. Complete and submit your [evaluation](#) of the Grade 4 Elementary-Level Science Test or the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test.

NOTE ON THE SPRING 2021 ELEMENTARY- AND INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL STAND-ALONE FIELD TESTS:

In recognition of the variability in the manner that instruction is being provided to students across the State in response to COVID-19, the Spring 2021 Elementary- and Intermediate-Level Stand-Alone Field Tests will not be administered.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

For questions regarding the requesting and storing of the Grade 4 Elementary-Level and Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Tests, please contact the Operations Group by email to examrequest@nysed.gov or by phone 518-474-8220.

Fax supplemental requests for the Grade 4 Elementary-Level and Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Tests to 518-474-2021.

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

For questions regarding test administration policies and procedures, please call OSA at 518-474-5900 or e-mail emscassessinfo@nysed.gov.