

What We Know

About this year's tests:

- Teachers and administrators have been instructed not to “read, reveal, review, or duplicate the contents of secure test material before, during, or after a test administration.” This is not a new rule but this year administrations were under a lot of pressure to remain quiet regarding the tests.
- Before the Pearson contract, all tests were posted for public viewing after they had been given. The State Education Department maintains that it cannot release all test questions because the tests are expensive to develop and some questions might be used on future tests, including the embedded field test questions.
- Teachers who are scoring tests sign a disclaimer that they will not discuss the contents of the test with anyone.
- The reports that have been leaked by teachers and students across the state reveal that problems with the ELA test persist: confusing questions with more than one correct answer, inappropriate reading passages for students' grade level, materials that are 2-3 grades above recommended grade level, product placement, among other things.
- Considering the rules in place regarding teacher and principal access to the tests, the question of who has seen the tests becomes all the more important. Our understanding is that Chancellor Farina, the NY State Board of Regents, members of the NY State Assembly and NY State Senate, have *not* seen the tests.
- PS 321 has been flagged for field tests this Spring; Principal Phillips is sending them back unopened.
- NY State's contract with Pearson is up at the end of the year.

About the Teacher Evaluation Law:

- Governor Cuomo has left it to the State Education Department and the NY State Board of Regents to determine the specifics of NY's Teacher Evaluation System; however, the law passed has the following parameters:
 - The Teacher Evaluation System **must** use value-added measures from test scores.
 - The Teacher Evaluation System is **prohibited** from including any of the following: lesson plans, artifacts, student portfolios, student or parent survey
 - No matter what the percentages are, if a teacher is rated *ineffective* on the value-added test score measure, they cannot be rated *effective* or *highly effective* overall.
- Current Teacher Evaluation Measures: 20% state test scores; 20% local measures; and 60% school-based administrator's observations.
- The new law requires a percentage of the MOTP come from an outside evaluator.

- NY State does not currently have a *Commissioner of Education*; a new commissioner will be appointed by the Board of Regents.
- The State (Board of Regents and State Education Department) has until June 30th to devise its Teacher Evaluation System and then districts will have until November 15th to devise one for approval by the state. These deadlines are currently being contested.
- Schools have been asked to have students complete a survey of their teachers as a pilot for Teacher Evaluation; given that the law prohibits such data, and that the survey is inappropriate to ask 3rd-5th graders to complete, it is most likely that PS 321 will not participate but our SLT will make the decision.

About Opt Out:

- It is being reported that over 200,000 children refused the tests across NY State this year; with some districts reporting 70-80% opt-out rates.
- At PS 321, 36% of testing-grade students refused the tests.
- Chancellor of the Board of Regents, Merryl Tisch, while previously very critical of opt out, is now saying that the State has to listen to the voices of parents and has done something of an about-face by saying schools could request a delay of nearly a year to implement teacher evaluation plans based on state tests, without penalty.

Possible Actions:

- Renew Principal Phillips' 2012 call for an examination and review of the tests. The review should be done by members of the Board of Regents, Chancellor Farina, elected officials, and a sampling of K-8 educators from across the state. There should be a presentation back to communities on:
 - What the tests were intended to evaluate;
 - What the tests evaluated;
 - How the tests were scored;
 - What was good/fair about the tests with sample questions;
 - What was problematic/unfair about the tests with sample questions
- Meeting of parent representatives with Chancellor Farina about our concerns and what we want from the City in terms of messaging to the state.
- Call for an end to the Pearson contract and a contract for educator-made tests (e.g. through Bank Street College, Teachers College, SUNY/CUNY Schools of Education).
- Statement of test quality from a coalition of teachers and administrators throughout District 15/NYC/NY State.
- A committee to discuss alternative forms of assessment for students and/or teachers (several people have asked for this and have volunteered to work on it).