



# CLIFFSIDE PARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent  
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Dear Parents,

In an effort to clarify school district responsibility with regard to the participation of students in statewide assessment programs, the Cliffside Park School District will follow the guidance issued by the NJ Department of Education in its September 2015 memo. The following are key points of this correspondence:

## **Federal Requirements Regarding Statewide Assessment**

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as reauthorized by the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001, requires schools with students in grades three through twelve to demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). In order to make AYP, a school must ensure that assessments have been taken by at least ninety-five percent (95%) of enrolled students in each subgroup, i.e., special education, English language learners, low income, race/ethnicity. Federal funding of key education programs is dependent upon districts meeting this requirement.

In compliance with the federal requirement to administer a statewide assessment program, State law requires, at N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-1, the Commissioner of Education (Commissioner), with approval of the State Board of Education (State Board), to establish a program of standards for graduation from secondary school, and such a program shall include, “[t]he development of a Statewide assessment test in reading, writing, and computational skills to be administered to all secondary school pupils...” In addition, N.J.A.C. 6A:8-4.1(a) and (b) provides, “[t]he Commissioner...may implement assessment of student achievement in the State’s public schools in any grade(s) and by such assessments as he or she deems appropriate,” and the Commissioner “...shall define the scope and level of student performance on Statewide assessments that demonstrate thorough understanding of the knowledge and skills delineated by the [state standards] at grade levels three through 12.” Subsection (c) further states that district boards of education “shall, according to a schedule prescribed by the Commissioner, administer the applicable Statewide assessments,” and subsection (d) confirms that “all students at grade levels three through 12, and at any other grade(s) designated by the Commissioner...shall take appropriate Statewide assessments as scheduled.”

Furthermore, in February 2014, the State Board passed a resolution confirming that district boards of education are obligated to implement the Core Curriculum Content Standards and to “ensure students meet the expectations and proficiency standards as measured by current and future State and local assessments.” **In Sum, State law and regulations require all students to take State assessments.** It is important to note that, although we have provided alternative ways for students to demonstrate the statewide assessment competencies required under State law for demonstrating proficiency for graduation during the transition to a new standardized test, students are still expected to participate in the statewide assessment program.

## **Policies and Procedures Regarding Student Participation in Statewide Assessment**

As in the past, schools must provide a testing environment that is conducive to students performing their best on the assessments. In this regard, school districts should be prepared in the event that students choose not to participate in the assessment program and adopt policies and procedures for the appropriate supervision and engagement of these students during administration of the assessment. The specific policies adopted by school districts regarding students not participating in the assessment program are entirely within the school district's discretion, in consideration of each district's school environment and available staffing and resources and recognizing that a statewide rule could not take into account these local circumstances. However, in developing these policies, districts should be mindful of ensuring appropriate student supervision and creating alternative options for student activity during the test period, so long as the testing environment is not disrupted and, in this regard, a sit and stare policy should be avoided.

### **Cliffside Park School District**

#### **Procedures for parental refusal of student participation in statewide assessments**

1. All parents must notify the principal in writing at least one week prior to the state assessment. The letter must indicate whether the child will be attending school or absent during testing.
2. Principals will respond to parent and confirm that the request was received.
3. Parents of High School students must sign a waiver regarding knowledge of HS graduation requirements.
4. Principals will maintain a list of students refusing the test.
5. Each school will be responsible for an alternative plan for students on the refusal list. This plan is dependent upon school staffing and available locations. The plan may include independent reading and schoolwork in a non-testing area.
6. If a student is absent on a testing day, regular attendance procedures will be followed.

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