

April 1, 2016

Office of the Chancellor

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Dear Parents,

With the New York State ELA and math exams beginning April 5, I want to share a few ways you can help reduce your child's stress and make this year's exams a positive experience.

I understand that past tests have caused anxiety. Please remind your child that this year's State exams have been changed to address concerns raised by students, parents, and educators. The tests will have fewer questions and will not have a time limit for students as long as they are working productively. This should reduce testing stress for your child. Students, including those requiring accommodations, will be able to work at their own pace in order to fully demonstrate their knowledge of the subject. Additionally, there will be no impact on teacher or principal evaluations. However, test results give the Department of Education important information to ensure that we are holding ourselves accountable to improve instruction and for continued academic progress.

To help your child enter the exams relaxed, the night before each assessment put books and study guides aside. Prepare your child's favorite meal and share an enjoyable evening together. Then help your child get a good night's sleep; rest is important.

In the morning, encourage your child to have breakfast, either at home or in school. Breakfast helps students stay energized throughout exam day. Explain that everyone feels stressed at times, and that some stress can be helpful to complete tasks. Tell your child you have confidence in his or her ability.

I know that families, students, and educators have expressed concerns around testing policy. I want you to know that as a City we have heard you and have taken steps to lower the stakes on testing. We changed our promotion policy; as a result, promotion decisions are no longer based on a single exam. Instead, students are assessed by many measures, including classwork, course grades, projects, and homework assignments. And new accountability tools no longer rate schools based on a single letter but on a variety of measures, including expert reviews, feedback from parents and teachers on the NYC Survey, as well as achievement and progress. We recognize that we can't reduce a child's, or a school's, progress to a single exam or letter grade. We will continue to listen to and work closely with families on this important issue.

Wishing your child and all of our students success on this year's exams.

Sincerely,



Carmen Fariña
Chancellor