



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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May 8, 2019

Kevin S. Casey, Executive Director
School Administrators Association of New York State
8 Airport Park Boulevard
Latham, NY 12110

Dear Mr. Casey:

I am writing in response to your letter on behalf of the School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS) expressing concern and frustration over the recent 2019 English Language Arts (ELA) Computer-Based Testing (CBT) administration. I appreciate your candor and welcome SAANYS's offer to work with the Department on strategies to improve CBT not only for our school administrators but also for our students and their parents.

Thank you for recognizing the issues encountered during the 2019 CBT ELA administration were not the desired outcome for the Department nor, indeed, for anyone in New York State. As you know, the Department works closely with BOCES, Regional Information Centers (RICs), districts, and schools across the State to help ensure a smooth CBT administration. To prepare for hundreds of thousands of students testing on computer this spring, we began performance testing in the fall 2018 with the vendor of the Grades 3-8 ELA and mathematics tests, and together we developed a series of State-wide CBT simulations to assist schools to prepare for administration this spring. Our efforts were and continue to be transparent as we work in collaboration with all stakeholders. Our schools were well prepared for the CBT ELA test administration thanks to the dedication and care of our educators and school administrators.

We regret that some school administrators have had difficulty responding to the concerns of parents and community stakeholders about the technical complications during the CBT administration. While more than 184,000 students successfully submitted their tests on computer for the Grades 3-8 English Language Arts exams, we understand that some students and administrators faced unacceptable technical challenges.

Although I share your frustrations, as we discussed at our recent meeting, it is imperative that we turn our attention and efforts to ensuring a successful rollout of the Grades 3-8 math CBT administration for the benefit of all of New York's students and schools. We will work with school and district leaders and staff after the mathematics administration is complete to conduct a thorough review of the technical issues so that appropriate steps can be identified and well-informed decisions can be made for future years. We have already begun gathering feedback and information from our RIC colleagues who provide direct support to districts and schools.

Concern for School/Administrator Credibility

I know our school administrators have worked diligently to support students' participation in State assessments and we heard many reports leading up to and during the CBT ELA administration that testing on computer is helping to "turn the tide" regarding student participation in State assessments. I want to express my sincere thanks to SAANYS and its members for its continuing efforts in this endeavor.

The Department understands the need to communicate quickly and effectively with district superintendents and school principals so they, in turn, can inform parents in a timely manner. To that end, we have reviewed and strengthened our CBT-related communication protocols for the CBT mathematics administration.

Impact on Student Scores and Accountability Status

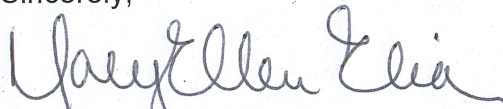
I have stated publicly that no student or school will be negatively impacted by technical difficulties experienced during the 2019 CBT administration. Due to the unfortunate issues that occurred during the 2018 CBT administration, we have a process in place to ensure fairness for students and schools which will be reviewed and adjusted to ensure any differences between the 2018 and 2019 administrations are considered. Our process errs on the side of supporting students, schools, and districts so stakeholders can trust the validity of State assessments and be assured they can make sound decisions informed by assessment results.

Specifically, the CBT ELA Special Review process established last year allowed an "Administrative Error Technical Issue" code to be applied to a student's assessment record when extenuating technical issues prevented a successful recovery of student responses. An AETI code excludes the student's score but continues to count the student's participation to positively impact accountability calculations. I know that schools are making every effort to meet the federally mandated minimum participation requirement of 95% of continuously enrolled students and I appreciate the leadership of our school administrators in this area.

Students in New York State deserve the best testing experience possible. The Department will continue efforts to guide, encourage, and support our school administrators as they plan for and transition to computer-based testing for the Grades 3-8 ELA and math assessments. I look forward to your continued collaboration to support schools' transition to CBT in the coming years.

I very much appreciate the support SAANYS provides to school administrators as they work diligently on behalf of all of our students.

Sincerely,



MaryEllen Elia
Commissioner

c: SAANYS Board of Directors