



July 28, 2010

One Larkin Center
Yonkers, New York 10701
Tel. 914 376-8667
Fax 914 376-8584

Yonkers Students Continue to Show Progress

“Cut Score” Change on NYS Exams
Leads to Inaccurate Perception about Student Growth over Years

Bernard P. Pierorazio
Superintendent of Schools

Dear Yonkers Community Members:

The purpose of this letter is to help you better understand the changes in scoring now in effect for the New York State English Language Arts and Mathematics Grades 3–8 assessments and dispel misconceptions that the new scoring may generate. Asserting the need to set higher goals for students, the New York State Board of Regents has revised the “cut score” needed to attain each level of proficiency on the exams. The Regents’ decision to raise cut scores is based on research comparing how student performance on the State’s eighth grade math and English tests relates to later performance on Regents exams and then to first year performance in college. Research indicates that a high number of NYS students who had achieved Proficiency or Mastery on the eighth grade exams and later passed their Regents still needed remediation during their first year of college. New York State Commissioner David M. Steiner explained, “If our tests are to be a useful tool for parents and teachers, they have to give us meaningful information – not only about a student’s current level of proficiency, but also about that student’s future prospects.”

While I support raising the standards of the exams, I caution that the change in scoring could distort one’s perception of the academic gains made throughout the District. In theory, recalibrating cut scores to better signal future academic success makes sense, but one can’t change the rules of a game midway through a quarter without confusing both the players and the bystanders. It becomes a totally different game.

The chart below exhibits the measurement of student achievement during the last five years, comparing the use of previous cut scores with the new cut scores. The data shows that; whether using the old cut score or new cut score, the District has improved over the past five years.

2006 to 2010 Districtwide Growth in Student Achievement on the NYS Testing Program

ELA	UP 16.3% using the previous cut scores	UP 5.8% using the new cut scores
Math	UP 23.1% using the previous cut scores	UP 14.7% using the new cut scores

While the new scoring criteria from the State may create misunderstanding, the District’s continued growth is unmistakably clear. We look forward to continuing our students’ academic growth in 2011.

Sincerely,


Bernard P. Pierorazio