

Peekskill City School District

Press Release

Wednesday July 28, 2010

Peekskill Schools Superintendent Responds to Change in Test Scoring

PEEKSKILL...Superintendent Judith Johnson issued the following statement today to faculty and staff in response to the release of 2009-2010 test scores on the New York State ELA and Math exams for grades 3 through 8.

Dear Colleagues,

Later this morning Commissioner Steiner will release the results of the 2009-10 ELA and Math test results for grades 3-8. The results were intentionally delayed by SED officials to allow time to change the way the tests are scored. The score needed to meet proficiency has been raised. A student must correctly answer more questions than in the past, to be rated proficient. The Commissioner has repeatedly remarked, in editorials and in speeches that our students must be better prepared for the lifelong journey of pursuing meaningful careers. He asserts, from data analyzed by a team of Harvard Researchers that our tests are not adequate measures of academic rigor and our students are not performing at levels that reflect rigorous scholarship. Consequently, he believes we are not adequately preparing them for the challenges they will face as they pursue college and career choices.

The results of the tests are now in, and, as a result of a new scoring system, our score, based on the new test standards, have declined across all grade levels, with one exception, Grade 8 Math. That score did not move up or down; it remained at the level met last year.

These results reverse the years of continuous progress we have experienced. We prepared our students to meet a set of Learning Standards established by the State Education Department. We must now take the time to conduct a thoughtful analysis of student performance to make sure we understand why the scores, under the new scoring system, took such a precipitous drop. It may appear discouraging at first, but I ask that we all step up to the new challenge. Our students must be prepared to successfully compete in the new 21st Century economy. We must also ensure they become informed voters, contributing citizens, and caring adults.

There are lots of new questions to pose as we examine the data. They include seeking assurances from SED that the new scores are competent, reliable and valid measures of academic performance. In the next few weeks, as we prepare for the opening of school, district administrators and the teacher leadership teams who are currently drafting the 2010-11 CIPs (Continuous Improvement Plans) will use this new test data to identify curriculum gaps that need to be addressed. We will also identify the students who are in need of intensive assistance, if they are to meet the new standards. Our budgets were completed last May so we will need to find the necessary resources essential to ensuring their civil right to a public education is not compromised. The State legislature has to take on this responsibility; they changed the performance standards and now must provide districts with the necessary funds to

ensure we have the capacity to meet the new challenges presented by our commissioner. To do less, to ignore the needs exposed in these test results, is to fail to address the most important group of our citizens, our children. Now the ball is squarely in the court of our governor and the State legislature.

Judith Johnson, Superintendent of Peekskill Schools

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