



Dear New Lebanon Families:

There is a lot of discussion regarding mandatory state testing of students in grades 3-8. We have visited the many websites and we follow the news. With all the discussion, we thought that we should let you know about State testing in New Lebanon, specifically. If, after reading this letter, you still have questions, please call one of us and we will do the best we can to answer your questions. We have tried to anticipate some of the issues or questions that have been raised in the media.

How are test results used in New Lebanon?

- Tests help us to measure the effectiveness of our curriculum by comparing our scores to those of other districts.
- Tests are not the sole measure of any child's abilities. We know that the classroom teacher who sees your child every day has the most complete information on your child's progress.
- We examine our test results with the assistance of a data consultant.
- Our teachers see where our curriculum is strongest and where we need to improve.
- New Lebanon's students have steadily shown improvement in achievement over the years. We believe that this growth is partly due to the information we gain from these test results, which have allowed us to evaluate how we develop curriculum, purchase materials and provide professional development.
- The more students who participate, the more accurate this information is for us as educators.

Does New Lebanon "teach to the test?"

- No, because teaching to the test is not an effective instructional practice.
- This is not a "drill and kill" district that promotes test prep over instruction.
- We teach the curriculum, a local curriculum developed by New Lebanon teachers and administrators to best address the math and ELA Common Core learning standards.

What about linking test results to teacher evaluations?

- NY State requires some teachers to have the test scores linked to their evaluations.
- This is a heavily politicized topic that is tossed around by members of a lot of groups with a lot of different agendas.
- New Lebanon's teachers have not been professionally harmed in any way by test scores.
- New Lebanon's experience has been that 100% of the teachers and administrators who have received scores from NY State, based on test results, received either an effective or highly effective rating.

- New Lebanon teachers and administrators also have personal concerns about the entire NY State teacher evaluation rating system, but those concerns won't be resolved by eliminating testing.

Is New Lebanon concerned about students getting anxious before the tests?

- We have heard these concerns and some sad stories about worried students in other school districts. As a result, we minimize discussion about the tests during instruction. We want students to want to learn for the sake of learning, not because of a test.
- All we expect is that any student tries his or her best. And that goes for any test, not just state assessments that we are required to administer.
- Our teachers do not want your child to arrive on testing days worried or anxious.
- If you think that your child is getting stressed over these or over any tests, please let us help to alleviate those concerns.

Students will take lots of tests over the years. We want to be open about testing so that this topic does not create tension between parents and teachers. Please let us know if we can answer questions or engage in a discussion of NY State testing in New Lebanon. We are open to that discussion and invite your input.

Sincerely,

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Jr/Sr HS Principal

Leslie Whitcomb
Superintendent