

LONGWOOD CENTRAL SCHOOLS

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June 22, 2015

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The administration of the 2015 Standardized Testing Program for Grades 3 through 8 is completed.

The changes to the new assessments over the past few years have proven challenging in several ways as we transition to the next generation of technology-based assessments. We find ourselves in the midst of a swirl of local, state and national concerns about assessments in general. We are sensitive about any test we administer as we want our time to be well invested and the results worthwhile and informative to students, parents and teachers. While we understand there are concerns, there are also aspects of the assessment process that we know to be true in the Longwood School District. I write today to share with you our position and the future expectations of Longwood's continued participation in the New York States Annual Assessment process.

As we move to a more technology-based learning experience, the limitations of the multiple choice items characteristic of the previous generation of assessments become more evident. The New York State Assessments gives students opportunities to work through multi-step processes and explain their answers. I am confident that, with proper support from teachers and parents, our students will rise to the higher expectations embodied in these new assessments, which are based upon more rigorous content standards.

Certainly, each of us know our children's progress and growth are much more dynamic than the sum of their standardized assessment scores. We use multiple data points from a variety of sources to make decisions about our students' needs as well as determine effective instructional methods. We fully recognize that an important component of student assessment is the careful observation and the support of a master teacher.

There are certainly differing opinions as to which assessments best serve our students and how and when they should be delivered. We ask that parents understand that administering standardized assessments is a requirement of all public schools in New York State, as well as

most other states in the nation. Opting out of the assessments will hurt our schools and our district.

We have been advised by both the Federal and New York State Education Departments that schools, districts, and states will be subject to sanctions if the number of students who refuse to take state assessments causes the school or district to fail to achieve their designated performance targets.

I am requesting that those who object to the present assessment please utilize ways, outside of keeping students from testing, to express those objections. Please do not place our schools and programs at risk through non-participation.

I have recently recommended to the Longwood School District Board of Education that we establish a District Assessment Advisory Committee that will work together to formulate and inform our collective thinking and practice around assessments. In addition we will continue as a community to voice our concerns with our elected representatives and with both the Federal and New York State Education Departments to inform them of our ideas, researched findings, and recommendations grounded in solid fact that can result in sustained change.

The promise of next generation assessments is evolving to a more updated method of measuring student progress beyond the era of the No Child Left Behind, "bubble the multiple choice answer" format. We need to have this experience in order to determine what we really think of this next generation of assessment.

It is my hope that we will continue to work together to help students understand that although tests are an important challenge, they are meant to be an opportunity to show others their personal best. Most importantly standardized assessments are only one among many measures of a child's academic success.

Thank you for your continued interest and assistance with the education of all students in the Longwood School District.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael R. Loneragan", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael R. Loneragan, DSW
Superintendent of Schools

MRL/si