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TO: District Superintendents of Schools
Superintendents of Public and Nonpublic Schools
Principals of Public and Nonpublic Schools

FROM: Gerald E. DeMauro

SUBJECT: January 2004 Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Performance Test

Shipments of the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Performance Test materials will be delivered by UPS between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on December 15, 16, or 17, 2003.

This memorandum provides information concerning the shipping, storing, administration, and return of test materials for the January 2004 Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Performance Test.

Administration Schedule

The Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test is comprised of two parts: the Performance Test and the Written Test. The Performance Test should be given in January on dates selected by the school or district. If your school has block/semester programming for intermediate-level science instruction, you may administer the test in May to those students who have science instruction only in the spring semester. In this circumstance, you will need to store the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Performance Test until its administration to those students in May 2004. You must complete the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Block/Semester Examination Storage Certificate in Appendix IX of the *Manual for Administrators and Teachers* and return it to the Department by January 30, 2004.

The Written Test is to be administered during a period to be established by the Department each year. For the 2003-04 school year, the testing period for the Written Test is June 2 through June 17. Students who are absent on the specific administration date established by the school must be tested if they return to school by June 17. Results for such students must be included in the reports submitted to the Department.

Security of the Tests

The principal of each school ordering the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test is responsible for making the necessary arrangements for safeguarding the materials ordered for the school. All test materials must be placed in a secure place immediately upon arrival at the storage location. In addition, the sealed packages of secure test materials must not be opened prior to the day each test is scheduled to be administered. The packages should be opened just early enough to permit distribution of the materials for each test.

Shipments of the Performance Test materials will be delivered by UPS between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on December 15, 16, or 17, 2003. Schools that do not receive their shipment of secure test materials by 12:00 noon on December 17, 2003, should track the shipment of test materials to them from the Department on the Internet. Go to: <http://www.ups.com/tracking/tracking.html>. Click the Reference Number tab. In the Reference Number field, type the 12-digit BEDS code of the school where you indicated you wanted your tests to be shipped. If you are unable to track your shipment or notice some other irregularity, contact the Office of State Assessment via fax at 518-474-2021.

As soon as each shipment of test materials arrives at the school or other approved location, it should be checked to verify that all materials indicated on the packing sheet have been received. Secure test booklets should be counted through the sealed packages without opening them. If the sealed package has not been opened but a discrepancy of more than five exists in the number of test booklets, write the exact number received on the shipping notice and contact the Department via fax at 518-474-2021. (It is not necessary to contact the Department about discrepancies of less than five as long as the sealed package has *not* been opened.) Shrink-wrapped secure test materials must not be opened until the day that the test is scheduled to be administered. Except for taking inventory of your shipment, you must keep all secure test materials in a secure location. Packages containing scoring materials may *not* be opened until after the test has been administered in the school. If a school determines that some materials are missing from shipments, contact the Department via fax at 518-474-2021.

The secure location where test materials are being stored should be checked daily to ensure that the test materials have not been tampered with and remain secure. The combination or key to the storage location must be maintained under strict security conditions to preclude access to the test materials by students and other unauthorized persons. Please note that after the tests have been administered, all test booklets must be collected and securely stored.

Return of Tests and Scoring Materials to the Department

The Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Performance Test will be reused in its entirety next year. Principals are required to return all unused Performance Test answer booklets, including large-type, braille, and alternative language editions; and all Performance Test Rating Guides to the Department's Test Distribution Unit following the scoring of the Performance Test.

Students To Be Tested

Except as noted below, all public school students in Grade 8 and all ungraded students who are age equivalent to students in Grade 8 must take the State assessments administered for their grade level. This includes students who have been retained in Grade 8. Nonpublic schools are strongly encouraged to administer these tests to their students in accordance with these same provisions.

General Education Students

The Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test should be administered to students in the grade in which they will, by the end of the school year, have received instruction in all of the material in the Intermediate-Level Science Core Curriculum (5–8). While this grade is typically Grade 8, the test may also be administered to students in Grade 7 who, by the end of the school year, will have received instruction in all of the material in the Intermediate-Level Science Core Curriculum (5–8) and are being considered for placement in an accelerated high school-level science course when they are in Grade 8. The inclusion of Grade 7 students who meet these criteria is a local decision. Schools can use the scores for these Grade 7 students to help determine whether students should be placed in accelerated science courses. Students who take the test in Grade 7 will

not be permitted to take the test again in Grade 8. Therefore, caution is advised in administering the test to Grade 7 students. If a Grade 7 student scores below the State-designated level of performance, the student will be required to have academic intervention services the following year.

Schools are required to administer this assessment to those Grade 8 students who did not take this assessment last school year as Grade 7 students, unless such students will be taking a Regents Examination in science at the end of this school year. School principals have the discretion to either require or waive the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test for those accelerated Grade 8 students who did not take this examination during the last school year but who will be taking a Regents Examination in science at the end of this school year. For those accelerated students for whom the school waives the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test, the student's achievement in science will be measured by the student's performance on the Regents Examination in science.

Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) Students

All LEP students are required to take the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test. Alternative language editions of the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test are provided in Chinese, Haitian Creole, and Spanish. LEP students may take the tests either in an alternative language or in English, whichever would be better for the student. LEP students may also use both an English and an alternative language edition of the test simultaneously. These tests may be translated orally into other languages for those LEP students whose first language is one for which a written translation is not available from the Department. Schools are permitted to offer LEP students specific testing accommodations when taking these tests. (See pages 4-5.)

Students with Disabilities

The Committee on Special Education (CSE) must decide for each student with a disability on a case-by-case basis, and document on the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), whether the student will be participating in the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test or will not be participating in this assessment because the student is eligible for the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) for Students with Severe Disabilities or for a locally selected assessment. The criteria that the CSE must use to determine a student's eligibility to participate in NYSAA are available at the web site: <http://unix33.nysed.gov:9280/specialed/alterassessment/home.html>. Information on the eligibility criteria for students with disabilities to participate in a locally selected assessment is available in the memorandum entitled *Supplemental Guidelines for Participation of Students with Disabilities in State Assessments: Locally Selected Assessments*. This memorandum is available at the web site: <http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/participate.htm>.

When determining which students will be participating in this test, be sure to consider those students with disabilities who attend programs operated by the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) as well as any other programs located outside the school.

Testing Accommodations

Students Who Incur Disabilities Shortly Before Test Administration

Principals may provide accommodations when testing general education students who incur an injury (e.g., a broken arm) or experience the onset of a short- or long-term disability (e.g., epilepsy) acquired or diagnosed within 30 days prior to the administration of State assessments. In such cases, when sufficient time is not

available for the development of an IEP or a Section 504 Accommodation Plan (504 Plan), principals may authorize certain accommodations that will not significantly change the skills being tested. These accommodations are limited to:

- extending the time limit for a test
- administering the test in a special location
- recording the student's answers in any manner
- reading the test to students (only for students whose vision is impaired)

Eligibility for such accommodations is based on the principal's professional discretion, but the principal may confer with members of the Committee on Special Education (CSE) or with other school personnel in making such a determination. Prior permission need not be obtained from the Department to authorize testing accommodations for general education students. However, a full report concerning each authorization must be sent to the Office of State Assessment. Further, if the student is expected to continue to need testing accommodations, the principal must immediately make the appropriate referral for the development of an IEP or 504 Plan.

Students with Disabilities

All students with disabilities must be provided full access to the Grade 8 Intermediate-Level Science Test to the extent that such testing is consistent with their individual needs. Students identified by the Committee on Special Education (CSE) of the district as having a disability should be allowed to use the testing accommodations specified in their IEP or 504 Plan. Students who have been declassified may continue to be provided testing accommodations if recommended by the local CSE at the time of declassification and in the student's declassification IEP. Plan all necessary arrangements for implementing testing accommodations well in advance of the test date. The principal is responsible for insuring that students are provided with the testing accommodations specified in their IEP or 504 Accommodation Plan.

The Department's Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) provides more information on testing accommodations for students with disabilities at the Internet address: <ftp://unix2.nysed.gov/pub/education.dept.pubs/vesid/oses/test.access.mod/testacce.txt>.

Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) Students

Schools may provide the following testing accommodations to limited-English-proficient students:

- *Time Extension:* Schools may extend the test time for LEP students. Principals may use any reasonable extensions, such as "time and a half" (the required testing time plus one-half of that amount of time), in accordance with their best judgment about the needs of the LEP students. Principals should consult with each student's classroom teacher in making these determinations.
- *Separate Location:* Schools are encouraged to provide optimum testing environment and facilities for LEP students. They may administer State tests to LEP students individually or in small groups in a separate location.
- *Bilingual Dictionaries and Glossaries:* LEP students may use bilingual dictionaries and glossaries when taking this examination. The bilingual dictionaries and glossaries may provide *only* direct translations of words. Bilingual dictionaries or glossaries that provide definitions or explanations are *not* permitted.

- *Simultaneous Use of English and Alternative Language Editions:* For this examination, LEP students may use both an English and an alternative language edition of the test simultaneously. However, they should be carefully instructed to record all of their responses in only one of the two editions. The alternative language edition used by the student should be so indicated on the student's answer document.
- *Oral Translation for Lower Incidence Languages:* Schools may provide LEP students with an oral translation of this examination when there is no translated edition provided by the Department. All translations must be oral, direct translations of the English editions; written translations are not allowed. No clarifications or explanations may be provided. Translators should receive copies of the English edition of the tests one hour prior to administration. The Department's Office of Bilingual Education and the Bilingual Education Technical Assistance Centers (BETACs) can assist schools in locating suitable translators.
- *Writing Responses in Native Language:* LEP students making use of alternative language editions or of oral translations of this examination may write their responses to the open-ended questions in their native language. Scoring the tests is the responsibility of the school. However, the Department's Office of Bilingual Education and the BETACs can assist schools in locating persons who can translate the students' responses into English to facilitate scoring of the answer papers.