



Cold Spring Harbor Central School District

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Dear Parent / Guardian:

I hope this letter finds you rested and invigorated for the potential that the 2013-2014 school year holds for our students. As you are most likely aware, this past spring, all of our students (grades 3-8) were assessed on a new set of learning standards called the "Common Core." These standards were adopted by the New York Board of Regents in 2010 with the goal of introducing more rigor into the curriculum and working to ensure that students in New York State will be "college and career ready."

You will soon have access to your child's scores on these assessments through the parent portal. These scores reflect performance on the newly adopted standards and, as such, cannot be compared to previous years. A significant difference in the assessments between this year and former years is that the State changed the "cut score," which is the means by which the State designates which of the four levels a student is performing at: Level 1- "Well Below Proficient", Level 2 – "Below Proficient", Level 3- "Proficient" or Level 4 – "Excel."

It is important to note that the "cut scores" for the past year's assessment have been raised to encompass approximately 30% more of the student body who had been previously designated as *Proficient* to now be categorized as "Below" or even "Well Below Proficient." Steve Kussin, an educational commentator for WCBS News put it this way in his weekly column for the Long Island Herald. *"... suppose the outfield walls were moved back 100 feet in every baseball stadium. Far fewer homers would be hit, but everyone would clearly understand why. So it should be with this drop in scores.*

Suppose Johnny gets a 77 on a Regents exam. What does that mean? In a year when the test is particularly difficult, that 77 might be at the top of the class, but in another year, on an easier exam, that score could be mediocre at best. Year-to-year comparisons are foolish. So it is with this year's assessment results."

Dr. Kussin suggests that the most effective way to measure a district's overall performance is to examine it with regard to statewide performance. To do this, one does not look at the arbitrary number (the cut score) but at the percentile rank in New York State.

For example, if you look at the chart below, you can see that in 2012, third grade students in Cold Spring Harbor scored at the 90.7%ile on the ELA across all public school districts in New York State. This year, as fourth graders, their class performance rose to 93.3%, thus demonstrating an increase of 2.6%. Overall, the district demonstrated a .3%ile increase which is commendable, particularly in light of the fact that the assessments were more rigorous.

**Statewide Change in Percentile Rank on Mean Scale Score for Reported District
(offset by cohort/grade)**

2013	ELA 4	ELA 5	ELA 6	ELA 7	ELA 8	Math 4	Math 5	Math 6	Math 7	Math 8	Average
%ile rank	93.3	92.7	94.5	87.0	91.7	93.4	90.9	91.7	87.5	95.8	91.9
2012	ELA 3	ELA 4	ELA 5	ELA 6	ELA 7	Math 3	Math 4	Math 5	Math 6	Math 7	Average
%ile rank	90.7	89.6	93.3	92.8	92.3	89.8	93.3	87.3	90.5	96.4	91.6
%ile Change	+ 2.6	+3.1	+1.2	-5.8	-0.6	+3.6	-2.4	+4.4	-3.0	-0.6	+0.3

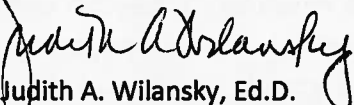
In his letter to schools, Commissioner of Education John King underscored the fact that the test results do not indicate that student performance is regressing. "I want to make it clear that the change in test scores does not mean that students are learning less or that teachers and schools are performing worse than last year.... The results from these assessments will help you and your school directly address the learning needs of your child that he or she gets and /stays on track for college and career success." To further emphasize the transition between standards, this year the State is not requiring that every student who scores below "Proficient" receive academic support. If your child has been designated as benefitting from additional academic support, you will be notified in writing by your school on or about the time you receive access to your child's score reports.

While many public schools in New York State struggle with High School graduation rates, please be assured that academic readiness for college level work remains a hallmark of the Cold Spring Harbor Schools. Over 95% of the 2013 graduating class were accepted by and are attending 4 year private and public colleges/universities across the United States. We remain very proud of the students' accomplishments and their successes beyond their High School experience.

While the "dust-up" over the change in assessments has caused undue consternation among parents all across New York State, please be assured that we remain committed to the education of your child in all aspects – social-emotionally and physically as well as academically. By working together, we will endeavor to focus on all of the aspects that are necessary to help students become "life ready."

Thank you for your continued support of our schools.

Sincerely,


Judith A. Wilansky, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools