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To: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Public and Nonpublic Schools
Principals of Public, Nonpublic, and Charter Schools

From: David Abrams 

Subject: Update on the 2005-06 NYSESLAT Testing Program

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on the various activities that are ongoing in support of the New York State English as a Second Language (NYSESLAT) testing program. In January 2006, you will receive specific information on ordering and shipping the NYSESLAT from Harcourt Assessment Inc., the testing company working with the Department on this program. Specific information on test administration and scoring will be posted on the Department's website well in advance of the testing periods.

The NYSESLAT testing program is designed to meet the requirements of the NCLB legislation as follows:

1. All limited-English-proficient (LEP) students must be tested annually to determine their proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English.
2. Student progress toward English proficiency, based on annual measurable objectives, must be demonstrated annually.

The Department and Harcourt have carefully evaluated the suggestions for the improvement of NYSESLAT that New York State teachers and administrators have provided. Many of these enhancements will be included in the 2006 NYSESLAT form. A significant enhancement is the inclusion of direct writing items in the K-1 NYSESLAT test.

Test Administration Dates

Teachers must administer the Speaking Session to students individually at a location separate from other students. Schools must administer the Speaking Session *only* between April 24 and May 19, 2006.

The Listening, Reading, and Writing Sessions must be administered to groups of students at separate times. Schools must administer the Listening, Reading, and Writing Sessions of NYSESLAT to their LEP students between May 8 and May 19, 2006. Each school may choose its own testing days within that time period. The complete test administration schedule is available at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/schedules/ei.pdf>.

Ordering NYSESLAT Tests and Answer Documents

In January 2006, Harcourt will mail a letter and an instructional guide for ordering NYSESLAT tests to the principals of public, charter, and nonpublic schools. The Harcourt Spectrum Instructional Guide will provide information on how to place a NYSESLAT test order electronically using their website. Orders must be made by the school principal or by a staff person designated by the principal. Only one order per school building will be accepted. This system was also used last year but has been enhanced for 2006.

Public and charter schools must obtain machine scannable answer sheets for NYSESLAT from their Regional Information Center (RIC) or large city school district scanning center. Nonpublic schools ordering NYSESLAT will obtain machine scannable answer sheets from the Department.

Scoring, Scanning, and Processing Timetable

The Department and Harcourt have finalized a timetable for the scoring, scanning, and processing of the NYSESLAT tests. The complete schedule of important NYSESLAT testing dates is attached to this memorandum (Appendix A). The scoring dates and deadlines for submission of student data included in this chart are based on the test administration windows.

Item Maps

Item Maps showing the relationship between the Spring 2005 NYSESLAT and the New York State ESL Learning Standards have been posted on the Department's website at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/home.shtml>. Teachers are encouraged to use their students' results on the 2005 NYSESLAT in conjunction with the 2005 NYSESLAT Item Maps to obtain insight into their students' performance and to plan ESL instruction.

Item Maps will be provided after the administration of the Spring 2006 NYSESLAT. In order to promote LEP students' learning and progress on the NYSESLAT and content assessments, it is crucial that the ESL curriculum and instruction reflect the standards and performance indicators for each appropriate grade and proficiency level.

Scoring Train the Trainer Workshops

Harcourt and the Department will provide six regional turnkey training sessions from the end of January to mid-February 2006. These are “train the trainer” sessions, which will focus on scoring the Speaking and Writing subtests. These sessions for the New York City area will be coordinated with the New York City Department of Education, which will provide information to the New York City schools on the dates for the training. In other areas, the Bilingual Education Technical Assistance Centers (BETACs) will invite selected districts in their respective regions to participate in the turnkey training. Participants in the training will then turnkey the training for teachers in their districts. The BETACs will schedule training for teachers in the remaining districts. The Department will develop an agenda and a final schedule for these statewide training sessions.

Scoring Resources

After the 2006 NYSESLAT is administered, Harcourt will send DVDs and booklets as part of the scoring materials for the operational test. A toll free Help Line for Scoring will be available at Harcourt. Questions and answers for scoring will be posted on the Department’s website at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/home.shtml>.

Test Samplers

The purpose of the test samplers is to help teachers prepare students for taking NYSESLAT by making them familiar with the types of questions that will appear on the test. To reflect enhancements to the 2006 NYSESLAT, the K-1 test sampler will now include direct writing items. The Grades 2-12 test samplers will also be revised to include prewriting items. The updated test samplers and Directions for Administering will be available in mid-December on the Department’s website at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/samplers.htm>.

Parent Brochures

By mid-November 2005, an updated informational brochure describing NYSESLAT and how it measures the progress of English language learners will be posted on the Department’s website at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/brochure/parent.htm>. The brochure will be available in English, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish.

Additional Information

Additional information and updates are posted regularly on the NYSESLAT website at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/home.shtml>. All resources referenced in this memorandum will be available at that website, along with the resources listed in Appendix B. The website is your best source for the latest information on this important program and I urge you to check regularly for updates. In addition, specific information for teachers and administrators regarding test ordering, test security, and test administration and scoring will be available well in advance of the tests.

I hope this information is helpful. Please feel free to email any further questions, concerns, or inquiries to emscassessinfo@mail.nysed.gov.

APPENDIX A
IMPORTANT NYSESLAT 2006 TESTING DATES
(Revised March 28, 2006)

Activity	Target Dates
Five Turnkey Training Sessions on scoring NYSESLAT	2/1 – 2/8
Schools order tests via Spectrum	2/1 – 3/10
Speaking test booklets arrive at schools	4/24 – 4/25
Administration of the Speaking Test	4/24 – 5/26
Listening, Reading, and Writing test booklets arrive at schools	5/3-5/5
Administration of the Listening, Reading, and Writing Tests	5/8 – 5/26
DVDs and booklets for scorer training arrive at schools	5/24 – 5/25
Questions and answers for scoring posted at http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat	5/30
Help Line for Scoring available	5/30 – 6/12
Scoring of constructed responses	5/30 – 6/12
Submit scorable materials to scanning centers*	6/12
Return test booklets to Harcourt	6/16
Scanning	6/13-6/30
Preliminary files to Repository	6/26
Preliminary files to Harcourt	6/30
Final data to Repository	7/10
Final file to Harcourt	7/14
Scores available to school through GROW	8/14

* New York City and Yonkers may establish different due dates for district schools to submit answer sheets for scanning.

APPENDIX B
EXISTING RESOURCES

Resource	Web Address
NYSESLAT Home Page	http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/home.shtml
NYS English as a Second Language Learning Standards	http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/biling/resource/ESL/standards.html
BETAC Directory	http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/biling/betac.html
Office of State Assessment	http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/