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Office of State Assessment

Summer 2008

**TO:** Principals of Schools Administering August 2008 State Examinations

**FROM:** Thomas J. Schoeck 

**SUBJECT:** The August 2008 Regents Examinations and Regents Competency Tests

**IMPORTANT:** Regents boxes will be delivered to single-shipment storage locations on Monday, August 11, or Tuesday, August 12. For daily-delivery locations, deliveries are scheduled for Tuesday, August 12, and Wednesday, August 13, with each shipment containing the next day's examinations. In all cases, delivery can be expected between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. See "Shipment of Examination Materials" below for further information.

This memorandum provides essential information about the shipping, storage, and administration of the August examinations. In addition, all persons coordinating the administration of the August 2008 examinations should be familiar with the publication *Regents Examinations, Regents Competency Tests, and Proficiency Examinations: School Administrator's Manual, 2008 Edition*. This manual is available on the Department's web site at: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/sam/secondary/home.html>. If you have any questions about this information, please call this office at 518-474-8220 or 518-474-5902.

Also enclosed with this memorandum, which has been posted on the Department's web site, are a list of regional centers, a memorandum regarding the content of each August examination, and the schedule for the August 2008 examination period.

#### SHIPMENT OF EXAMINATION MATERIALS

Examination materials will be delivered to schools in either two or three shipments, depending on the titles requested and the location of the school. The first shipment, containing nonsecure materials, will be shipped in cardboard cartons and/or padded mailers and delivered to schools by August 5. This shipment will include student identification sheets and answer booklets for the Regents Competency Test (RCT) in Writing and answer sheets for all other RCTs; essay booklets for the Regents Examinations in English, Global History and Geography, and United States History and Government; Physical Setting/Earth Science Performance Test materials; reference tables for the Regents Examinations in Physical Setting/Chemistry and Physical Setting/Earth Science; and directions for administering and scoring all examinations.

The final shipment(s), comprising the secure materials for all August examinations, will be packed in locked Regents boxes and arrive at daily-delivery schools (or their Department-approved storage locations) between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 12, and Wednesday, August 13. Single-shipment schools will receive their single deliveries of secure materials on Monday, August 11, or Tuesday, August 12. Refer to the confirmation notice you previously received to identify your school's status as either daily delivery or single shipment.

Be sure that someone in your school or approved storage location is available between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on the scheduled delivery days to accept the examination shipment. Should any problems occur in connection with the delivery of examination materials, call this office immediately at 518-474-8220 or 518-474-5902.

The locked plastic sliding-lid Regents boxes will be secured with two locks and a plastic crimp. Padlock keys are mailed to the person who submitted the examination request to the online examination request system. If your padlock keys are not delivered by noon on Monday, August 11, please call the Test Distribution Unit at 518-474-5914.

#### CHECKING THE EXAMINATION SHIPMENT

Enclosed in each delivery is a shipping notice listing the materials included. As soon as you receive the shipment, use the shipping notice and your School Record of Examinations Requested to ensure that the appropriate examination materials have been received for each subject. If your inventory shows that the shipment contains excess examination materials or that it contains examination materials that you did not request, please notify the Office of State Assessment immediately via fax to 518-474-2021. It is the principal's responsibility to maintain these excess materials under the same strict security as the examinations that your school will be administering, as outlined on the next page under "Safeguarding Examination Materials." Under no circumstances may the sealed packages of secure examination materials be opened during this inventory. The number of test booklets contained in each of the sealed packages is indicated below:

- *All Regents Examinations, including Spanish editions, and the RCT in Writing:* Each sealed package will contain 25 booklets.
- *Restricted editions – All editions of the RCTs in Mathematics, Reading, Science, Global History and Geography, and U.S. History and Government.* Each test booklet is numbered and sealed in a separate envelope. The exact quantity requested will be shipped to the school.
- *Braille and large-type editions of all Regents Examinations:* The exact quantity requested will be shipped to the school.
- *Scoring keys:* The scoring keys for August examinations will be sealed in three packages, one for each session.

It is imperative that schools avoid intermixing materials for the August 2008 examination period with examination materials from past administrations that may remain in safes or vaults or in classrooms.

#### EMERGENCY SUPPLIES OF EXAMINATION MATERIALS

If your school's shipment does not include all the materials needed, additional materials must be obtained from a nearby regional center. The regional center must be contacted immediately to ensure that a sufficient supply of examination materials will be available when you or your representative arrives. A list of regional centers is enclosed with this memorandum. Ordinarily, supplies will be available at regional centers of all examination materials *other than* braille and large-type test booklets, alternative language editions of the RCTs, and Spanish editions of Regents Examinations. If you require an emergency supply of ten or more test booklets of any regular English edition of any examination, or if you require materials that are *not* ordinarily available at the regional centers, fax a brief statement of your summer school's needs to the Office of State Assessment at 518-474-2021.

Examination materials are available at the regional centers only on the day of the examination. Secure materials for morning examinations will be released in the morning; secure materials for afternoon examinations will not be released until after 10:30 a.m. Scoring keys will not be released by regional centers until after the Uniform Statewide Admission Deadlines (9:15 a.m. for morning examinations, 1:15 p.m. for afternoon examinations). Subject to these limitations, materials may be picked up at regional centers between 7:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

In order to obtain examination materials at a regional center, an individual must present a letter of authorization written on his or her school's letterhead and signed by the principal. The letter must identify the person picking up the materials and list the specific materials requested. Anyone obtaining examination materials must provide identification with a photograph and countersign the authorization letter before the examination materials will be released.

#### **SAFEGUARDING EXAMINATION MATERIALS**

The principal of each school requesting examinations must make the necessary arrangements to safeguard the materials requested for the school. Upon delivery, the locked Regents boxes must immediately be placed in the Department-approved safe or vault at the storage location designated by the school. Examination materials may be removed from locked Regents boxes only for inventory and for administration of the examinations on the scheduled date.

If the locked Regents boxes containing a school's shipment of secure examination materials are found to be too large for the approved storage location, the principal must contact this office immediately at 518-474-8220 or 518-474-5902 to make arrangements for the storage of the boxes in an alternate approved location.

The Regents box keys and the combination or key to the safe or vault must be maintained under strict security conditions to preclude access to the examinations by students and other unauthorized persons. When the safe or vault where the Regents boxes are stored is unlocked, it must be kept under continuous supervision by school personnel. Additionally, the locked Regents boxes must be visually checked daily by the person in charge of the administration of the examinations to ensure that they have not been tampered with and that their contents remain secure.

The sealed packages containing examination booklets may not be opened until the day each examination is scheduled to be administered, and no earlier than is necessary for distribution to proctors. Scoring key packages must be kept secure and may not be opened until after the Uniform Statewide Admission Deadlines of 9:15 a.m. for morning examinations and 1:15 p.m. for afternoon examinations. The principal must notify the Department by fax to 518-474-2021 if any of the packages of secure examination materials were not sealed properly when received.

No school administrator is authorized to redistribute any State examination to any location outside of New York State by any means, including but not limited to use of common carrier, hand carrying, facsimile, or e-mail, without the Department's express written approval. If there is a circumstance that may warrant the administration of a State examination at a location outside of New York State, the school official must contact the Office of State Assessment to request prior Department approval.

Following the examination period, the principal must sign and return to the Department the completed Examination Storage Certificate and Deputy and Proctor Certificate (included in the shipment of secure materials).

#### **ADMISSION OF STUDENTS TO EXAMINATIONS**

Students who have not completed the appropriate course(s) may not be admitted to State examinations. Students must have written authorization from the home school principal or superintendent to "challenge for credit." In all cases, nonresident students and any others not enrolled in your summer school program may be admitted to State examinations only at the written request of the home school principal. Public school districts may not charge resident students a fee for admission to the August examinations. Nonresident students may be charged a reasonable fee to cover administration and scoring costs.

## **STUDENT IDENTIFICATION AND RECORDKEEPING**

Plans should be made before the administration of the examinations to verify the identity of each student entering the examination room, especially those not enrolled in the summer school program. Accurate attendance records must be kept for each examination. The school must have attendance records that can be used to verify the presence or absence of any student for any of the August examinations.

## **ADMINISTERING AND SCORING NONRESTRICTED EXAMINATIONS**

The general test administration procedures for Regents Examinations and for the RCT in Writing are outlined in the *School Administrator's Manual*. Specific directions for administering and scoring each examination are included in the shipment of nonsecure testing materials. The teacher directions, which may be photocopied, must be distributed to all proctors before the examination date. In addition, all proctors must be instructed to carefully read the directions so as to become familiar with the instructions. It is not acceptable for proctors to rely on their recollection of these instructions from past administrations.

## **ADMINISTERING AND SCORING RESTRICTED EXAMINATIONS**

The administration procedures for restricted examinations (all RCTs except the RCT in Writing) are different from those for nonrestricted examinations. General information about the administration of restricted examinations is provided in the *School Administrator's Manual*. Specific instructions for administering and scoring each of the restricted examinations are included in the shipment of nonsecure testing materials sent to each school requesting restricted editions. Each person who will administer the restricted editions must be thoroughly familiar with the procedures detailed in both publications.

The scoring keys provided for the alternative language RCTs in Mathematics and Science are different from those for the English language editions. These scoring keys will be sent only to those schools requesting these editions. To ensure that correct scores are recorded, make certain that all persons responsible for rating any State examination are provided with the appropriate scoring materials.

## **CHANGE IN THE PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS RETAKING THE REGENTS EXAMINATION IN EARTH SCIENCE**

Effective June 2008, schools will be administering a new version of the Earth Science Performance Test (Part D) as a component of the Regents Examination in Physical Setting/Earth Science. All students taking the August 2008 Regents Examination in Physical Setting/Earth Science, including those retaking the written examination, must take the new version of Part D. Scores earned on the Earth Science Performance Test in conjunction with prior administrations of this written examination may no longer be carried forward and applied to the student's final examination score for this Regents Examination.

All students taking future administrations — August, January, and June — of the Regents Examination in Physical Setting/Earth Science must take the performance test each time they take the written examination. Only the performance test score earned by the student in the weeks immediately preceding the written examination may be used to determine the student's final examination score for this Regents Examination. This change in procedure with respect to students retaking this examination will ensure that every student's examination score is based on the full composite of the student's demonstration of knowledge, skills, and abilities at the time the written test is taken.

Consequently, all schools planning to administer the Regents Examination in Physical Setting/Earth Science must make arrangements for all students who will be taking the written examination to take the new performance test as well. The performance test must be administered during the last two weeks of the summer school Earth Science course and no later than the day before the written examination. This requirement applies both to students enrolled in the course of study, such as in summer school, and to students who plan only to retake the examination. All schools administering this examination must notify students of the date and time to appear for the performance test.

## REPORTING ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING IRREGULARITIES TO THE DEPARTMENT

The principal is responsible for all aspects of the school's administration of State examinations and must take appropriate measures both to prevent, as much as possible, and to investigate all irregularities associated with the administration and scoring of these examinations. In addition, the principal must report the following events in writing to the Office of State Assessment:

- All student infractions of the Department's policy prohibiting the use of cell phones and other communications devices during State examinations.
- All suspected or confirmed cases of students gaining prior access to the specific questions on or answers to a State examination.
- All confirmed cases of students having committed fraud on State examinations.
- All interruptions of testing sessions including those caused by power outages or fire alarms.
- All suspected or confirmed cases of teachers, administrators, or paraprofessionals giving aid to students during a State examination or altering student responses on an examination paper.
- All instances in which a State examination is administered without Department authorization at a time outside the published Statewide schedule.
- All instances in which a school does not conform to the Uniform Statewide Admission Deadline in administering a State examination.
- All instances in which scorers do not rate State examinations in accordance with the scoring materials provided by the Department.
- All cases in which a school official does not adhere to the Department policy concerning the finality of examination scores as determined by the teacher scoring committees. The policy is explained in the *Directions for Administering Regents Examinations, August Administration* under the heading "Rating Examination Papers" on pages 11 and 12.
- All cases in which a school official or staff member alters or otherwise misrepresents a student's earned examination score during scoring, recording, or reporting.
- All cases in which student answer papers are lost prior to either the scoring of the papers or recording of the scores in students' permanent records.

Principals must report all such occurrences in writing by fax to 518-474-1989 or via e-mail to [emscassinfo@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:emscassinfo@mail.nysed.gov). More complete information on strategies for avoiding the occurrences listed above and for addressing them should they occur may be found in the *School Administrator's Manual* and in the *Directions for Administering Regents Examinations*.

## TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

### *Students with Disabilities*

Summer school principals must ensure that students with disabilities are provided the testing accommodations specified in their Individualized Education Programs or Section 504 Accommodation Plans when they take State examinations. Under certain conditions, special examination arrangements may be made for general education students taking State examinations. The guidelines to be followed in such circumstances are provided in "Administering Examinations to Students with Disabilities" in Section Two of the *School Administrator's Manual, 2008 Edition*.

### *Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) Students*

Schools may provide the following testing accommodations to LEP 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 half that amount), 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 optimal testing environments and facilities for all students. Schools may administer State examinations to LEP students individually or in small groups in a separate location.
- *Third Reading of Listening Selection:* Proctors may read the listening passage a third time to LEP students who are taking the Regents Comprehensive Examination in English.
- *Bilingual Dictionaries and Glossaries:* LEP students may use bilingual dictionaries and glossaries when taking State examinations in all subjects **except** languages other than English. 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 those Regents Examinations for which the Department provides direct written translations, LEP students may use both an English and an alternative language edition of the test simultaneously. However, they should be 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. (Note: The alternative language editions of RCTs provided by the Department are **not** direct translations of the English editions being administered during the same examination period and therefore may **not** be used simultaneously with an English edition.)
- *Oral Translation for Lower Incidence Languages:* Schools may provide LEP students with an oral translation of a State examination when there is no translated edition provided by the Department. This accommodation is permitted for State examinations in all subjects **except** English and languages other than English. 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 Foreign Language Studies, and the Bilingual/ESL Technical Assistance Centers (BETACs) can assist schools in locating suitable translators.
- *Writing Responses in the Native Language:* LEP students making use of alternative language editions or of oral translations of State examinations may write their responses to the open-ended questions in their native language. Scoring the tests is the responsibility of the school. If needed, the Department's Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies and the BETACs can assist schools in locating persons who can translate the students' responses into English to facilitate scoring of the answer papers.

#### DEPARTMENT REVIEW

Selected summer school principals requesting examinations will receive notice concerning Department review by the end of the August Regents Examination period. This notice will indicate each subject for which answer papers must be submitted via traceable mail to the Department. All answer papers not requested must remain on file in the school for one year. Schools asked to submit answer papers for the Regents Comprehensive Examination in English or Mathematics A should produce and retain in the school photocopies of answer papers for all students scoring below 65 on these examinations. These photocopies will be needed by the school to determine which component(s) the students may be eligible for in the Spring 2009 Component Retesting.

#### HANDLING OF STUDENTS' COMPLETED EXAMINATION MATERIALS

When a student has completed a State examination, the student's answer materials should be collected and confirmed, or "checked in," by a proctor and logged in to a list of examinees before that student is permitted to leave the testing room. When they are hand scored, answer papers for all State examinations must remain in the custody of teachers or administrators in the school building or regional scoring site until the rating process is complete and scores are recorded on the students' permanent records. When student papers are scored in cooperation with another school, answer papers may be transported to the cooperating school for such scoring. It remains the principal's responsibility to ensure the security and integrity of such papers while they are out of

the building. Answer papers that are sent to a scanning center for scoring may be stored either at the scanning location or in the schools where the examinations were administered, as long as storage conditions are maintained that will not limit the principal's access to an individual student's answer paper. As an additional precaution, all scrap paper should be retained until all examination scores have been recorded.

If a student's answer paper is lost, the principal or superintendent must conduct an inquiry and file a written report with this office. This report must include (1) a description of the loss or disappearance, including a list of all students whose papers are missing; (2) the examination title and administration date; (3) the likely cause of the loss or disappearance; and (4) what steps will be taken to prevent a similar occurrence in the future.

#### **REPORTING AND RECORDING TEST SCORES**

Summer schools must record the names and test scores of all students tested and then send the scores for each student to the student's home school. Information about recording test scores on the permanent record is provided in Section Three of the *School Administrator's Manual*.

#### **MATERIALS RETURNED IN THE REGENTS BOX**

The materials that must be returned to the Department in the Regents boxes are listed in Section Four of the *School Administrator's Manual* and on the checklist provided to schools in the shipment of secure test materials. Please combine all materials to be returned to the Department in one Regents box wherever possible.

Return all Regents boxes no later than August 29. Please check all storage locations for any boxes remaining from previous examination periods and return those boxes as well. Each school must pay for the return shipment of its own Regents boxes; the boxes may not be returned collect. The boxes may be returned by United Parcel Service (UPS) or any other carrier. Regardless of the carrier, the school must call the carrier, make the necessary arrangements, and pay for the return shipment. If Regents boxes for a school are returned collect, the Department will refuse delivery.

#### **ONLINE SUBMISSION OF TEACHER EVALUATIONS OF EXAMINATIONS**

Suggestions and feedback from teachers are an important contribution to the test development process. The Department provides an online evaluation form for State assessments where teachers may respond to several specific questions and may make suggestions. Go to [www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/exameval](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/exameval) to complete and submit your evaluation of any examination.