



# Cazenovia Central School District

## CAZENOVIA, NEW YORK 13035-1098

Matthew Reilly  
Superintendent  
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Dear Parent/Guardian:

As you know, in April our elementary and middle school students in grades 3 through 8 will be taking the NYS Assessments in ELA, Math and Science. To provide clarity on the role of testing at Cazenovia, we want to share with you some information to help ease any worry or anxiety that you or your child may have about testing.

Three components: a rigorous curriculum, outstanding instruction, and regular assessment, work together at Cazenovia to ensure that all children continually grow and achieve. Assessment is vital to understanding the learning needs of individual students and the programmatic needs of the school. The data we gather and analyze from assessments throughout the year helps us refine our curriculum and improve our instructional methods. Most importantly, the data we gather on individual students helps teachers address any learning gaps that may exist and provides direction for enrichment and acceleration opportunities. While testing is an integral part of students' education at every level, it is equally important to remember that a test is simply *one measure* of performance. At Cazenovia, multiple measures of performance factor into the portrait we paint of each unique child.

### “Opting In”

First, we want to thank Cazenovia teachers, parents, and students for the high rate of “opting in” for last year’s NYS Assessments. This cooperation helps to position the District favorably as we work to constantly improve teaching and learning and to maximize the returns on our taxpayer investments. The following are some of the benefits of opting in:

1. ***Allowing our students to demonstrate what they know and are able to*** do as compared with the expectations set by the state standards. The results help us analyze the effectiveness of our curriculum, which is developed locally by our teachers and administrators to meet the state standards. Further, these assessments allow us to objectively compare the progress of our students with students in other schools and districts.
2. ***Supporting the hard work of our teachers and administrators*** as they utilize the entire instructional cycle – standards, curriculum, instruction, assessments, analysis of results, and professional learning – to continuously improve the opportunities provided to our students. This has led to a positive tone in our buildings.
3. ***Preparing our kids for future standards-based instruction and assessments*** such as Regents Exams and the SAT. When students take the 3-8 assessments, they are “practicing” in a sense for future assessments, when the stakes are higher. It is reassuring to note that on the 3-8 assessments, students do not pass or fail nor do they fail content area courses or get held back in their current grade based on their assessment results. Instead, they are deemed to have met

proficiency or not – and then future guidance or support services are provided accordingly. These 3-8 assessments also build the stamina and “grit” students will need for future exams.

4. ***Providing the district with critical information*** about our students, our professional learning, and the investments that we make with taxpayer dollars. The high “opt in” rate in Cazenovia means we have more objective information when making decisions which helps guarantee an effective return on investment.

5. ***Ensuring that the District remains in good standing with the state and federal government*** with our student participation – 95% is required over a two year period –and our student progress. The combination allows us to be recognized for excellence in various award programs such as the Reward School (state) and Blue Ribbon (federal) programs.

### **About “Opting Out” or “Parent Refusal” of NY State Tests**

We want to be clear about what our obligations are as a district when it comes to testing, what the effects of “opting out” are, and how such a decision impacts the learning environment.

1. We want to make you aware of the following: The district is not allowed to opt students out of testing.
2. Children, especially in grades 3-8, have been working hard all year to adapt to the new learning standards. Testing provides teachers, students, and parents the opportunity to recognize progress or address areas of concern.
3. New York state assessments are one of many tools our district uses to identify areas of strength and concern. This information is used to improve instruction and teaching for all our students.
4. The scores from these assessments do not appear on, or impact, your child’s report card.
5. The testing schedule involves 1 ½ -2 hours of testing per day for six total days. The assessment schedule is available on the District website.
6. If you are considering “refusal” or “opting out”, this must be communicated to the building principal in writing by April 10, 2015. Understand that children refusing the NYS Assessments will be required to sit in the classroom without resources during the test administration.

Please remember, that the best source of information concerning your child’s curriculum and the associated assessment remains the classroom teacher and building principal. We believe that opposition to assessment is best expressed through correspondence with your elected officials, not through test refusal.

Thank you,

Matthew Reilly  
Superintendent