



## Rye City School District

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Superintendent of Schools

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April 8, 2015

Dear RCSD Parents and Guardians:

There has been much attention given to “opting out” of standardized testing in the news media of late. I wanted to take this opportunity to provide some information to District parents and guardians as we enter the standardized testing period for students in grades 3-8.

I want all parents and guardians to understand that whatever your own feelings may be about the necessity and/or efficacy of standardized tests, that there are ramifications to the Rye City School District should your children **not** take the tests. **I strongly urge that parents do not "opt out" of test taking, for the reasons below.**

**Should any individual school within the District not achieve a 95% student participation rate on the state tests, that school will be deemed by New York State as a “School in Need of Improvement.”** The school would be labeled and publicly identified in the media as a school that is “not meeting expectations.” As a community where we are justifiably proud of our schools and our students, I think we can agree that this is a designation that Rye does not want.

There are financial ramifications as well. “Schools in Need of Improvement” will be required to deliver a corrective action plan, which could prove very costly to the District, and the District may be subject to increased State monitoring. **In addition, failure to comply with federal law may result in a loss to the District of monies which could amount to over \$750,000 (based on this year’s figures).** That’s the equivalent of ten teacher salaries.

Federal law requires that we test all students in grades 3-8 in English Language Arts and Mathematics, and grades 4 and 8 in Science annually. The results from these tests, which are generally available in the late summer to early fall, are used to measure

student progress, assess teacher effectiveness and in monitoring school-level and district-level progress in the Common Core standards. They in no way impact a student's report card.

The term "opt out," which we have seen so often in the media, is not a term recognized by New York State Education Department. For them, children who do not take the standardized tests are simply "test refusal" cases. Please note that the state has no formal procedure to decline participation in its testing program.

We understand that there is a certain level of anxiety around these tests, but I would encourage you to view them as just one of many measures that inform both parents and educators not only about individual student progress, but also about how well our schools, teachers and the District as a whole are doing in educating your child(ren). They can be extremely helpful in identifying areas where we can improve. As a result, your children will benefit from resulting better instruction.

Should you feel strongly about standardized testing or teacher assessments based on tests, I would encourage you to reach out to our legislators, Assemblyman Steve Otis; State Senator George Latimer; Merryl Tisch, the Chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents; or Governor Andrew Cuomo, to express your opinions. Testing and teacher evaluation based on testing are current, active topics before the Governor, legislature and the Board of Regents.

Should you have any additional questions, please contact your school principal who can best inform and assist you with regards to your child's specific needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Alvarez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Frank Alvarez  
Superintendent