

## **Ditch No. 2 pencils for NY school tests**

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ALBANY - Schools across New York will be able to ditch pencil-and-paper tests this coming spring, if they so choose.

The state Education Department is giving elementary and intermediate schools the option to administer the state's mandated English and math exams on computers this academic year, allowing them to drop traditional paper-based tests.

But the state's not forcing the change on schools: They'll be able to choose which grade levels and subjects, if any, make the switch to computer-based tests.

"The (Education) Department continues to transition to (computer-based testing) as part of its commitment to both meeting the needs of 21st century learners and improving test delivery, test integrity, scoring validity, and turnaround time on testing results," Deputy Education Commissioner Angelica Infante-Green wrote in a memo this week to the state Board of Regents.

The computer-testing option will be available for the state's standardized tests given to grades 3-8.

This year's English exams will be administered in late March, with the math exams in early May.

The Regents, who set education policy in New York, were briefed at their Monday meeting on the state's shift toward computer tests, which included a pilot program last academic year.

The pilot program applied only to so-called field tests, which do not count for students but are used to gauge questions for future exams.

About 800 schools across the state participated, with 60,000 students taking at least one field exam on a computer. The pilot program turned up no major technological issues, according to the state.

The shift to computer testing has been years in the making, and a 2015 contract with test-maker Questar Inc. called for the company to offer computer-based models for testing.

The tests will be the same whether they're offered on paper or on a computer.

A sample test posted by Questar allows users to pull up electronic protractors, calculators and notes pages as test takers make their way through the exam.

Students are able to revisit prior questions and change their answers before making the decision to submit their test for grading.

Robert Lowry, deputy director of the state Council of School Superintendents, said the state Education Department is being “appropriately cautious in trying to phase this in.”

“Computer-based testing holds the promise of getting more information back faster, so that is a plus,” Lowry said.



### **New York state will offer mandated tests on computer.**