



August 21, 2013

Dear Parents,

As we gear up for the 2013-2014 school year, I want to take this opportunity to provide you with important information on the upcoming release of your child's testing results.

This past spring I sent a letter that explains Minnesota's transition to new, better tests that aimed at preparing all students for college and careers. I encourage you to read the May letter for more complete information about the positive changes to the content that your child is learning in school. The letter can be found on the Minnesota Department of Education website. [View the May letter on the MDE website.](#)

Additionally, you may already know that some students experienced technical difficulties in taking online tests last spring. When that happened, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) took swift action to minimize the impact of these disruptions by allowing students to restart or continue their tests at a later time. MDE also gave schools more time to make sure all students had the opportunity to finish their tests.

At the conclusion of student testing, MDE made the decision to work with an outside organization to objectively analyze the 2013 test data and the potential impact the online disruptions may have had on individual student scores. After an in-depth investigation, the outside organization released a report with their findings. The full report can be found on the Test Administration page of MDE's website. [View the Test Administration page.](#)

The analysis in the report found that while some students did experience undesirable testing conditions, overall student and school scores were not negatively impacted.

I do want to emphasize that although the report suggests the technical difficulties did not have a widespread impact on student and school scores, there is no doubt that a number of Minnesota students were affected on those days. For this reason, I am taking necessary steps to ensure that Minnesota's testing vendor, American Institutes for Research (AIR), is fully prepared for future online assessments in Minnesota. Every student has a right to an uninterrupted testing experience, which is why I am instructing AIR to take all preventative measures to make sure this does not happen again.

Once the independent analysis was concluded, MDE consulted with Minnesota's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) regarding the findings. The TAC is a panel of technical and policy experts on educational measurement from across the nation, and they have recommended that MDE proceed with test result reporting. As they stated "...*Based upon our review of this independent third-party analysis we believe that reporting individual student scores for all students, including those who experienced testing disruptions is appropriate and valid. We also*

conclude that these scores are appropriate and defensible for use in the Minnesota school accountability calculations.”

Based upon all of the available data and the recommendation of the TAC, MDE will publicly release all school wide test results on Aug. 27, 2013. Your student's printed test scores will be provided to districts to distribute in the fall.

School performance is also demonstrated through Minnesota's Multiple Measurements Rating (MMR). Every Minnesota school receives MMR results, and based on these results, schools that accept federal Title I funding are eligible for a school designation. MMR results and school designations will be released on Oct. 1, 2013. [Feel free to visit MDE's website here for more information.](#)

As always, we continue to strive to share timely, clear information with you about your child's education. However, it is also important to remember that the results we are releasing next week are just one piece of the overall picture of how your student and school are doing. Relying on just one test score given on one particular day will only provide a small snapshot of what your child knows and can do. The best information comes from multiple years of test scores and other performance measures of individual student performance, especially when making decisions about student's educational plans and coursework. Moreover, nothing can replace talking to your child's teacher, reviewing their daily work and visiting your child's school.

Rest assured, my staff at the Minnesota Department of Education and I are committed to working closely with you, your school and your community to provide your child with a great education that prepares them for lifelong success. Best wishes for a successful school year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda Cassellius". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Brenda Cassellius
Commissioner of Education