

A Note About ERBs to Parents of Students in Grades 3–8

Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic has required us, as a school, to examine everything we do, how we do it, and why we do it. We have adapted and improvised as situations required, coming up with alternative plans and solutions to benefit our students.

As you know, fall is when we usually participate in our standardized testing, Educational Records Bureau's (ERB) Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP5) for grades 3 through 8. Because every decision we make is with our students in mind, we had to question whether administering this assessment this fall would be the best educational decision for them.

After significant discussion with many experienced educators, we have decided to forgo administering the CTP5 until fall 2021. This decision was made with the following information in mind:

- Our current focus is establishing a steady routine, assessing students to gain instructional data, and normalizing our school day for the students. Children who have opted for on-campus learning have just recently been welcomed back to school full-time, and some are still working remotely. Taking time away from instruction to familiarize students with the standardized assessment procedures and format, as well as administering the assessment, would pause this positive momentum and be counterproductive to the learning environment that we are trying so hard to normalize.
- Although we have consistently provided instruction throughout this pandemic, the reality is that until recently, our students (and all students across the country) had not been face-to-face with teachers in a classroom since March. Our main objectives are to ensure we recoup as much learning time as possible, promote a positive learning mindset, and help students continue their academic growth. Working remotely involves different skills than working in person, and students have needed to relearn how to “do school” all over again while building up the stamina to tackle academics. This is a process that takes time.
- Some of you may ask about giving the assessment in the spring. Based on decades of experience with administering and interpreting the CTP data, we firmly believe that testing in the fall is the best educational practice for many reasons. Administering the assessment in the spring would create inconsistent testing procedures and data interpretation—similar to comparing apples to oranges. This would also get our annual assessment process off track, as schools cannot assess in the spring and then again the next fall.
- You may hear that our Upper School colleagues offered students an opportunity to take the PSAT this fall. This is a standardized test, but there are significant differences between the PSAT and ERB tests. The PSAT is a practice SAT test taken by many college applicants in preparation for the SAT exam. In contrast, ERB assessments track student growth over time in grades 3 through 8. Foregoing this year's ERB administration will help us gather more accurate data about students' progress when we resume testing in fall 2021.

The ERB assessment data offers a snapshot of your child's educational picture, but it is not the only data that provides insight into how your child is performing. Rest assured that student performance is continually being assessed in all academic areas, more now than ever, and that

drives our instruction and programming. We firmly believe that allowing our students time to learn and grow is the best educational decision at this time; the fall 2021 assessment results will be a valuable piece of data and will get us back on track with our assessment protocols.

Thank you for partnering with us as we tackle issues and problem-solve while doing what is best for our students during this challenging time.