

DRAFT Letter to NY Community Leaders

NYSED's Office of State Assessment in partnership with NWEA, is inviting you to participate in the development of the content of our NY Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) assessments. We are asking you to consider assisting us in positively affecting our students' sense of community and appreciation for individual and cultural differences across our state and country, and around the world.

As you may know, our NY Grades 3-8 Reading and Writing assessments are passage based, meaning each question on the test depends on the text of a particular reading passage. We now have the opportunity to diversify the voices that students will encounter in these passages. This is where we are inviting you to enrich our test by helping us recruit potential passage writers from your community.

For all of those interested, NWEA will conduct a 1-hour virtual passage writing workshop where participants will be introduced to the process of writing passages for NY assessments. Topics will include:

- The reason why commissioned passages are used;
- Types of passages used (e.g., fiction, informational, literary non-fiction, poetry);
- Attributes of good test passages; and
- Suggestions for possible topics.

Following the workshop, NWEA staff will continue to communicate with the writers, offering suggestions and revisions to their works-in-progress to guide writers in developing passages that will be suited for the assessments.

During a second virtual meeting, lasting approximately ninety minutes, the writers will have the opportunity to collaborate with other authors to evaluate 1) each draft passage's literary merit; 2) the likely level of student interest; and 3) the extent to which the passage is suited for test questions aligned to New York's Next Generation ELA Learning Standards. Participants will collaborate, under the guidance of assessment professionals, to revise these draft passages as needed.

Following this second meeting, the writers will be given a due date for final submission. The submitted passages will follow the normal review process which includes these steps.

- NWEA Text complexity check
- NWEA Bias and sensitivity check
- NWEA review for grade appropriateness
- NWEA review against NY Passage Criteria
- NWEA review viability (i.e., will support questions written to NY ELA standards)
- NYSED Review
- NWEA Revisions
- NWEA Copyediting
- NY Educator Review

As an alternative to passage writing, perhaps some members of your community would be willing to be interviewed by an NWEA staff member who would use the interviewee's words to craft an informational passage. Interviewees would be provided questions in advance and allowed to respond to only those for which they feel comfortable answering. Questions will focus on interesting and unique aspects of the community including topics such as history, celebrations, values, etc. That information would then be put in an informational passage making it clear that the information was based on an interview with a person from your community.

If you are interested in more information, please contact Dr. Les Sewall at Les.Sewall@NWEA.org.