



# Regional School Unit No. 18

41 Heath Street Oakland, ME 04963 • Telephone: 207-465-7384 • Fax: 207-465-9130

**Carl Gartley**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Keith Morin**  
Chief Academic Officer

**Gary Smith**  
Chief Operations Officer

January 2, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As you may know, the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to administer annual assessment in reading and Mathematics to students in grades 3-8 and 11 and in Science in grades 5, 8, and 11. As a compliance measure, Maine has given the eMPowerME assessment in reading and Mathematics, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and the Maine Educational Assessment for Science to meet this requirement.

Standardized tests play a role in education. They provide a measure of the degree to which we are preparing our students for future vocations, including post-secondary educational opportunities. They also enable us to identify areas of strength and areas for growth within our schools and among groups of students so that we can make adjustments in curriculum, instruction and supports that will benefit our students. Regional School Unit No. 18 utilizes all assessment data to help inform our practices at the district, school, classroom and individual levels for our students. Although we encourage students and parents to participate fully in our assessment program, it is important to note that parents/guardians may opt their child out of state testing. If you are interested in doing so, please reach out to your child's principal to make this request in writing. Please know that we treat all test data with the utmost respect. The only people who have access to individual student scores are a student's teacher and administrator; the state reports school performance data but not student performance data.

We are very pleased that Maine has opted to administer the eMPowerME assessments for Mathematics and reading, for several reasons. First, the MEA includes computer adaptive tests. Adaptive tests (like the NWEA, which is given in RSU 18 two times per year in grades 3-8) take less time to administer than fixed tests yet result in a more accurate score. When a student answers a question correctly, the next question rises in difficulty, and when a student answers a question incorrectly, the next question falls in difficulty. This customization provides a fuller picture of a student's abilities and creates a more positive testing environment. Second, the MEA includes performance tasks. Performance tasks mimic real-world situations and give students opportunities to demonstrate their thinking skills, so are a more authentic measure of a child's capabilities. Finally, the eMPowerME evaluates writing (not in 2019-2020) and listening as well as reading and Mathematics; such skills are critical to success in school and work, so warrant the same oversight.

The testing window for students in RSU 18 is March 16th through May 8th. Principals and teachers will provide specific information in the coming weeks. We encourage students to try their hardest and do their best, while recognizing that any assessment is an in the moment snapshot and not the final word on a child's understanding or skill.



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Feel free to contact your student's principal if you have any questions about the upcoming MEA for Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy.

Sincerely,

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Chief Academic Officer  
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