

# Doing the math on test opt-out

## Decision time as state exams begin today

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Spring break is over, and for students in elementary and middle schools across Long Island, it's not just back to the books.

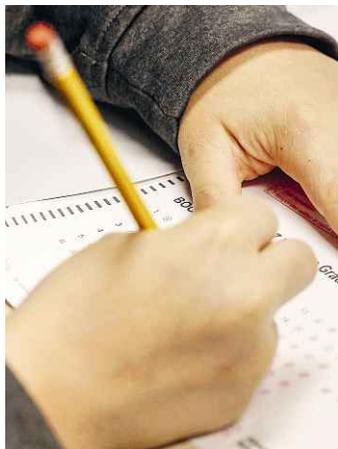
This week and a portion of next week are defined in part by the state math test — the decision to take the exam, boycott it, or in some cases bypass it for Regents geometry or algebra assessments given in June.

Local educators, as well as leaders of the test boycott movement, expect another round of sweeping test refusals in the 124 school systems across Nassau and Suffolk counties. Last year, at least 67,553 students on the Island refused to take the math exam in 94 districts that responded to a Newsday survey — 46.9 percent of pupils eligible in those systems.

As always, the math test comes a few weeks after administration of the English Language Arts exam. More than 75,000 of the Island's students in grades three through eight opted out of that test, about 47.2 percent of eligible students in 103 systems answering the newspaper's questions on participation.

Districts giving the computer-based math test in at least some grades have set two consecutive days in the state-designated time frame of Tuesday through May 7. For the traditional paper-and-pencil test, districts have chosen two consecutive days from Wednesday through Friday.

"There is a little bit of a stalemate that has happened," said Jeanette Deutermann, lead organizer of the LI Opt Out movement. "Yes, we are complying with the federal government that children in grades three to eight get standardized testing. But within that parameter, the state can comply with the federal government and not harm



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children. Tests don't have to be four days long ... and we could also look toward alternative assessments."

The number of students who take the math test is significantly lower than for the ELA because districts can waive the math exam for seventh- and eighth-graders taking accelerated math. Those students take the Regents Geometry or Regents Algebra I exam given later.

The math exams also come at a time when the testing vendor, Questar Assessments Inc., has faced increasing scrutiny because of a technical glitch that force temporary statewide suspension of the computer-based ELA test.

Department spokeswoman Emily DeSantis, in a statement, said more than 184,000 students statewide completed the computer-based ELA exams and "the Department is prepared to work side by side with schools throughout math CBT to ensure successful test sessions for our students."

The fallout has affected the number of schools giving the

computer-based math test, or CBTs. Statewide, 53 schools in 31 districts that initially registered to give the digital state math test in at least some grades decided to give the paper-based exam instead. That includes the Baldwin, Franklin Square, Oceanside and Westhampton Beach districts, according to the Education Department.

The boycott movement that began with small numbers in spring 2013 and mushroomed to tens of thousands of students annually since the 2015 test season has revealed distinct patterns: Some districts repeatedly have very high opt-out rates, while others show rates of under 20 percent.

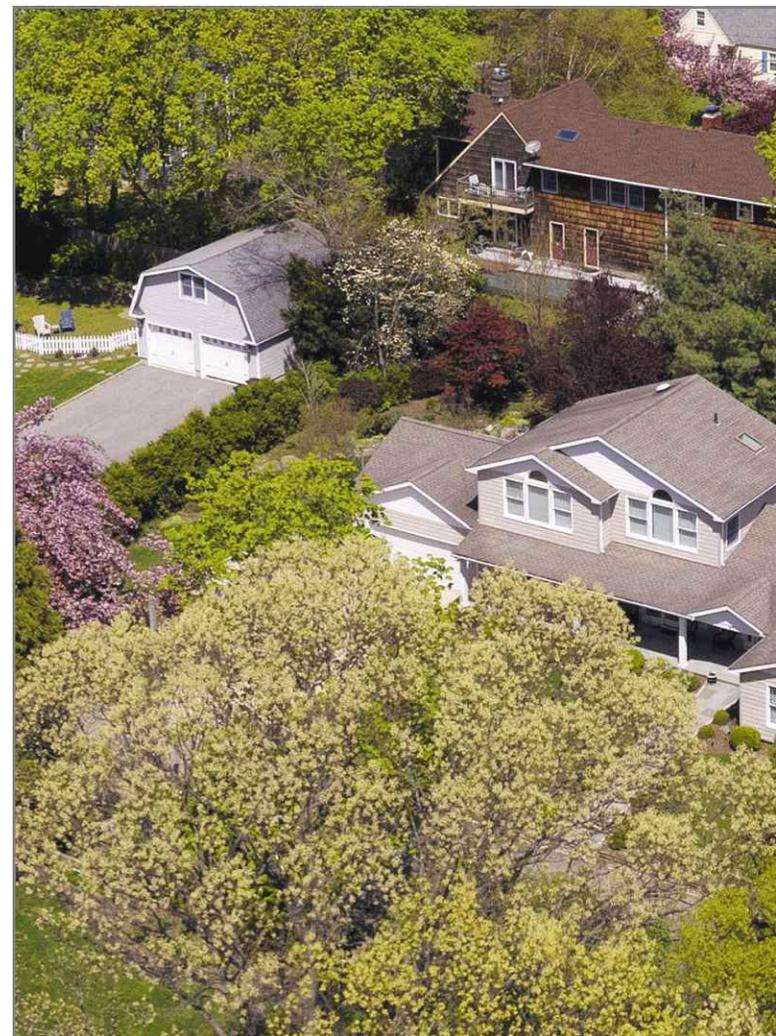
Districts including Comsewogue, Patchogue-Medford, Rocky Point and Shoreham-Wading River have registered refusal rates of near or above 70 percent. Meanwhile, opt-outs in systems such as Cold Spring Harbor, Elmont, Great Neck, Jericho, Roosevelt and Wyandanch, have been below 20 percent.

In Wyandanch, more than 95 percent of students took the ELA in early April. School leaders recently held a "test pep rally" for middle school students in the gymnasium at Wyandanch Memorial High School, complete with a deejay, snacks and games. The event for grades six through eight was held in anticipation of the math exams; a similar rally was held before the ELA test was given.

Hofstra University education professor Alan Singer said the boycott movement is strong in middle-class districts, with parents believing the testing regimen has distorted education for their children.

"What I see is that in some districts the movement is much weaker and there are multiple factors," he said. Affluent parents often pay for test prep for college-entrance exams and "they want their kids tested."

"In poor communities, such as Roosevelt and Wyandanch, I think there is a fear that their children will be left behind and they are afraid to pull their kids out," Singer said.



## Deputy mayor lacked permit for home project

### Loses post, but remains Northport trustee

BY SOPHIA CHANG  
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Northport trustee Tom Kehoe resigned from the position of deputy mayor last week after village officials said work on his Mariners Lane property was undertaken without proper permits, including building a foundation too close to the lot lines and building a set of stairs without permission.

Kehoe remains in his elected position as trustee. He said he applied for a permit but had not received it when work started. Kehoe also said the

home's foundation was constructed in the wrong location.

"The foundation was put in the wrong spot," Kehoe said in a telephone interview Monday. "Ultimately it's my responsibility. I'm not the surveyor or the mason, but it's my house. As we found out, it was in the wrong spot, I was building without a permit. I had put the papers in but I hadn't been issued a building permit. I should have not been building what I built."

"I know better. Shame on me," Kehoe added. "I was wrong and I apologize to my colleagues."