



## Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District

### PRESS RELEASE

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# District Communicates With Parents Concerning Change in NYS Test Scores

*Because of scoring changes by the New York State Education Department after tests were taken, many students will score in less proficient ranges*

Tonawanda – The Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District is taking a proactive approach to communicate with parents concerning scoring changes implemented by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) long after students in Grades 3-8 had already taken Math and English Language Arts (ELA) assessments (tests). Based on Math and ELA test scores, students are categorized on a four-point grading scale, four being the highest and one being the lowest.

Based on prior NYSED “cut scores” (the bar on the scoring chart that determines if students are above the cut or below the cut of proficiency) many students were consistently scoring “3’s and 4’s” at the higher end of the grading scale. That meant students would be designated as “proficient” in the subject area. Now that NYSED has “raised the bar” for what scores determine proficiency long after students had already taken Math and ELA assessments, many of those students will now score “1’s and 2’s” at the lower end of the grading scale, and be designated as “not proficient” in the subject area.

“Imagine you’re a professional baseball player and shattered Hank Aaron’s record by hitting 850 home runs in a season where the outfield fences were placed at 325 feet. Long after you’ve worked hard to achieve your goal, the commissioner rules the outfield fences weren’t challenging enough, retroactively moves the home run wall out to 450 feet, and nullifies your home run record. That’s essentially what NYSED did by changing cut scores after tests were taken,” said Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District Superintendent Mark P. Mondanaro.

Within the week parents across New York State will receive scores on the scale of “1-4” that determines whether or not their child is or is not considered “proficient” in Mathematics and ELA. To ensure parents understand the changes in cut scores and assessments that were put in place by NYSED, the Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District produced for parents a special edition of its “SchoolGram” newsletter devoted entirely to the change in test scores after students took the exams. Charts outlining what the new cut scores are and how the district results would have been had they not been changed are also on the district website: [www.kenton.k12.ny.us](http://www.kenton.k12.ny.us).

“It is critically important for our district to proactively communicate with parents concerning the changes in test scores. Many might understandably get upset that prior NYSED cut scores

determined that their children were ‘proficient.’ Now that New York State changed the benchmarks after tests were taken, many students may now be placed in ‘not proficient’ categories. I’m a parent and I would be upset as well, which is why we are reaching out to families in many ways about this,” said Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District Board of Education President Bob Dana.

The change in cut scores will have a profound impact on the increased number of students who must now receive additional academic interventions because of scoring a “1 or 2” on Math and ELA assessments. Under current regulations school districts must provide Academic Intervention Services (AIS) for students who are at this level. This is considered academically structured “extra help” to allow children to meet standards set by New York State.

The district will provide Academic Intervention Services for students that is structured to their needs. A thorough assessment of the academic needs of the student takes place. Some students at “Level 2” will receive rigorous interventions while others may receive less intensive academic interventions.

“In no way does this mean students have regressed or taken a step back academically. They are no different than the big league hitter who had the fences moved back retroactively. Nothing has changed concerning the academic skills our students possess. Our children are receiving an education of the highest quality, with a foundation based in a rigorous curriculum, taught by dedicated and hard-working teachers who are passionate about their noble profession,” added Mondanaro.

Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District Mathematics scores are nine percentage points higher and ELA scores are four percentage points higher than the New York State average. Had cut scores not been changed by NYSED after tests were taken 82% of Ken-Ton students would have been proficient in ELA and 93% in Mathematics.

Most recent Business First rankings for 2010 show the district is the 48<sup>th</sup> best in all of Western New York. This is the best overall ranking received by the District in six years, the second straight year of advances, and marks the first time in the history of the 19-years of Business First rankings that the District’s ranking has held steady or improved over four consecutive years. Lindbergh Elementary was ranked the 27<sup>th</sup> best school in Western New York, and Business First designated third-grade ELA scores at Franklin Elementary as “superior.”

Annual average attendance rate remains strong at an impressive 95%, and class sizes remain low at an average of 20 students per class. Academics will be further strengthened when the prestigious “International Baccalaureate” Program is implemented at Kenmore West High School in September of 2011. The challenging two-year curriculum combines rigorous academics with extracurricular activities in sports, the arts, and community service.

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*“We educate, prepare, and inspire students to achieve their highest potential”*