Dear Members of our School Community,

Last school year, many of our District students took the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment, known as the PSSA test. The PSSA test is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), which contracts with a test scoring vendor called Data Recognition Corporation (DRC).

Our District has learned from PDE that, through no fault of our District, certain completed PSSA math tests of some of our Russell Elementary School students were misplaced while being shipped by United Parcel Service (UPS) between Russell Elementary School and DRC. According to DRC, the box containing the misplaced tests was last tracked to a UPS hub located near DRC, but UPS never delivered it to DRC, and now cannot locate it.

Today, our District notified by telephone the parents of the 72 affected Russell Elementary School students of the very disheartening news that their children will not receive any test score for their PSSA math test from last school year.

Although our District did everything right, we deeply regret the frustration that this most unfortunate mishap has caused our affected Russell Elementary School students, families, teachers and administrators, and want to be completely transparent with our school community about this mishap. PDE joins our District in expressing that regret; please see the attached letter from PDE to the affected Russell Elementary School families.

Our District is inviting the affected Russell Elementary School parents to an informational meeting on Thursday, September 22, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. at Paxon Hollow Middle School.

In the meantime, interested school community members are welcome to call or e-mail our District’s Solicitor Mark Sereni at 610-565-5700 mas@dioriosereni.com to address any immediate questions or concerns that they may have.

Very truly yours,

Carol A. Cary, Ed. D.

Attachment
September 2016

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As you know, Data Recognition Corp (DRC), the commonwealth’s assessment vendor, has notified the Department of Education that the answer booklets for your child’s PSSA math exams were misplaced while being shipped between Russell Elementary School and DRC in Minnesota. I’d like to take this opportunity to reach out to you personally regarding your child’s missing PSSA scores. As a parent and as an educator, I understand that you are likely extremely frustrated regarding this situation, and I assure you that we at the Department of Education, as well as your local leaders, school administrators, and teachers are frustrated as well.

The Department has worked tirelessly with DRC and other partners to do all it can to recover the missing answer booklets, and I assure you that we will continue to do so until all reasonable solutions have been exhausted.

While Pennsylvania is working to embrace a culture that is less reliant on standardized tests, it is unfair to your child that he or she doesn’t have a score to benchmark his or her academic progress in mathematics for the 2015-16 school year. Additionally, while the number of missing answer booklets amounts to only a small fraction of total PSSA test takers statewide, I know this occurrence creates a series of challenges for individual students and the district’s teachers and schools. The Department will continue to work with the district to minimize the impact this event will have on your child and on the district’s other students and educators. Your child’s education and the success of the district’s efforts to provide a quality education to all of its students are primary objectives of the Department.

While I wish I were sharing better news, I would like to thank you for your involvement in your child’s education, as your contribution is critical. For this reason, I encourage you to continue any discussions with the district so that any questions you have can be answered, and to work with the district to contact the Department at 717.787.5820 with any questions that the district is not in a position to answer. When calling, please identify yourself as a caller from Marple Newtown School District, and we will ensure you are our first priority.

Sincerely,

Pedro A. Rivera
Secretary of Education
September 15, 2016

Carol A. Cary, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Marple Newtown School District
40 Media Line Road
Newtown Square, PA 19073

Dear Dr. Cary:

On behalf of Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), we deeply regret and sincerely apologize that a box of 72 completed answer booklets from Russell Elementary School is missing. In over 20 years of partnering with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on assessments, this represents the first and only case of a missing box between DRC and our shipping contractor, UPS, and we are extremely sorry that this incident has occurred.

While DRC receives and processes over 63,000 boxes annually for the Pennsylvania program, we take very seriously the impact that one box of missing answer booklets has on your District, Russell Elementary School, the parents, and, of course, the students, who worked hard on their assessments.

We have been working diligently with UPS to search for the missing box while also reviewing the entire document-handling process for Pennsylvania’s education materials to prevent any reoccurrence.

Again, we deeply regret that these students’ answer booklets are missing and remain committed to working closely and communicating with the state Department of Education, your District, and Russell Elementary School moving forward.

Sincerely,

Lisa Peterson-Nelson
Chief Quality Officer

Doyle Kirkeby
Senior Vice President, Operations

cc: Susan Engeleiter, Chief Executive Officer and President
Doug Russell, Senior Vice President, Education Program Management
Shaundra Sand, Vice President, State Assessment Programs