



A FAMILY GUIDE TO ANNUAL STATE TESTS IN NEW YORK: One of Many Measures of Student Learning

There are many ways to measure academic performance, and annual state tests are only one of them. These tests are not meant to tell the whole story. They are meant to be combined with other measures, including teacher feedback, classwork and projects, and report card grades. Together, these measures can give families a more complete picture of a student's performance so they can better support learning at home and advocate for their child.



State Assessments 101

The Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA, requires students to take state tests in reading and math every year in third through eighth grade and once in high school. In New York, students in third through eighth grade take the New York State Assessment in English language arts and math. Students in fourth and eighth grade take a test in science and those in fifth and eighth grade take a test in social studies. High school students take the Regents Exam in English, Algebra 1 and 2, science and social studies at the end of each course.

To earn a diploma, students must earn a passing score on at least five of the Regents Exams covering all subject areas (English, math, science and social studies). Students can retake a test if they need to, and there are other options available that allow for students to pass only four Regents Exams and another approved test in an arts or foreign language class. New York state colleges and universities use scores from the Regents to determine a student's placement and whether the student is ready for college level classes.

A Focus on Grade Level Skills

Unlike other tests, the New York State Assessment is focused on grade level material and is aligned to the state standards. The test questions match what students do and learn in the classroom every day throughout the year, which are the skills that are most important for students to learn in order to move on to more challenging content.

The test can be taken online or with paper and pencil. Each school district decides how students will take the test. The test includes a variety of different types of questions, including traditional multiple choice and more interactive questions such as plotting points on a graph, writing essays and analyzing text. New York teachers worked closely with the state to develop and review test questions.

Grade 6: Math

Which expression is equivalent to the phrase shown below?

the quotient of the sum of $2t$ and 2 , and twice the cube of s

- A $2t + 2$
- B $2t + \frac{2}{2s^3}$
- C $\frac{2t + 2}{3s^2}$
- D $\frac{2t + 2}{2s^3}$

Grade 3: ELA

Which sentence shows a cause and effect relationship that is stated in the passage?

- A People see lightning before they hear thunder.
- B Wildfires can start when lightning touches the ground.
- C Heat from electricity is hotter than the surface of the sun.
- D Lightning bolts can hit tall trees and buildings.



Useful Information for All

FAMILIES: Understanding Grade Level Performance

The New York State Assessment report gives families information on how well their child performed on different sets of skills in each subject. Families can use this information to identify where their child is doing well and where they may need support or practice. This helps families better support learning at home. It can also help them start meaningful conversations with teachers, set goals for each student's areas of improvement and identify resources and strategies that can be used at home and in school to help students make progress.

Questions to Ask the Teacher about Your Child's New York State Assessment Report :

- What does this mean about my child's learning?
- Is my child on grade level?
- Where does my child need more support or improvement?
- What short-term learning goals should my child meet to show progress?
- How can I support learning at home?



TEACHERS: Informing Instruction

Students take different types of tests throughout the school year. Some students take benchmark or diagnostic tests, such as MAP Growth, i-Ready or mCLASS. These are taken several times a year and measure mastery of important concepts and skills in reading and math. Students take a test at the beginning of the year to identify their “starting point” and again throughout the year to measure their progress. Benchmark tests help teachers identify and address learning gaps early on so students can stay on track to meet grade level expectations. While the assessment is only given at the end of the school year, it is one way of showing how much progress students made from the beginning of the year and how well they met grade level expectations.

While teachers use results from the New York State Assessment to understand each student's unique needs and support them in the areas where they need extra help, they also help teachers to improve their instruction. Teachers can use the results to look for trends in their students' learning to see what skills or concepts students learned and what content they struggled with. This helps teachers identify what they taught effectively and where they need to improve or change their instructional strategies.

SCHOOL & DISTRICT LEADERS: Informing Decisions

State test results are critical for school and district leaders to make informed decisions about schools and students. School and district level test scores show leaders how students across a school or district are performing and indicate if a certain group of students or schools need more support. This allows them to target additional support or resources to help those schools improve. District leaders can also use test scores to understand what strategies and changes are working.



STATE LEADERS: Helping Schools Improve

State leaders use results from the New York State Assessment to identify schools and districts that need more support and resources. They identify the schools with the lowest performance in the state, as well as schools with certain groups of students that performed much lower on the test than the rest of the students in that school. These schools receive additional funding and resources from the state to support students and teachers. For example, schools may hire more teachers or tutors or they may purchase additional instructional materials and programs, depending on the needs of their students.

Where Can I Go for More Information?

- For more information, visit P12.NYsed.gov/Assessment/ei/parent-Resources-20.html#faq
- To see sample test questions, visit EngageNY.org/Resource/Released-2019-3-8-ELA-and-Mathematics-State-Test-Questions
- For ideas on how to support your child's learning at home, visit PTA.org/FamilyGuides
- For more information about the New York PTA visit NYSPTA.org/

