

PARENTS' FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT NEW YORK STATE'S ANNUAL GRADES 3-8 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & MATHEMATICS TESTS

Every spring, the Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Tests are administered to students across New York State. These annual ELA and math tests for students in grades 3-8 are required by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. The tests are designed to measure how well students are mastering the learning standards that guide classroom instruction and help to ensure that students are on track to graduate from high school with the critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning skills needed for success in college and the workplace. The tests also show how schools and districts are progressing with the learning standards and can be used to support professional development for teachers.

1. What is new about the annual statewide tests for 2018?

- The number of test sessions for the annual Grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Tests will be reduced from three to two. This means that students will take each subject test over only two testing days instead of three as in past years.

2. Why did the Board of Regents reduce the number of test sessions?

- Fewer questions will lessen testing fatigue for students and better enable them to demonstrate what they know and are able to do.
- The decision to reduce the number of test sessions is also in line with recommendations from Governor Cuomo's Common Core Task Force Final Report.

3. When will the 2018 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests be administered?

- The ELA Tests administered by paper and pencil will be given on two consecutive school days of the school's choosing between April 11 – April 13. The Math Tests administered by paper and pencil will be given on two consecutive school days of the school's choosing between May 1 – May 3.
- The ELA tests administered on computer will be given on two consecutive school days of the school's choosing between April 10 – April 17. The Math Tests administered on computer will be given on two consecutive school days of the school's choosing between May 1 – May 8.
- There are make-up test dates for students absent on test days.

4. What are computer-based tests?

- For the second year in a row, some districts/schools have chosen to administer the 2018 ELA and Math Tests on the computer. This is called computer-based testing (CBT).
- Students in those schools utilizing the CBT option have access to CBT practice tests and most have had prior experience participating in other computer-based tests in ELA and Math.
- The computer-based tests will have the same questions as the paper versions. However, students testing on computer will select their answers for multiple-choice questions on the computer and type their responses to open-ended questions rather than handwriting their responses to these questions in the paper test booklet.

5. Will the test continue to be untimed?

- Like the 2016 and 2017 tests, the 2018 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests will be untimed. Schools and districts have the discretion to create their own approaches to ensure that all students who are productively working are given the time they need within the confines of the regular school day to take the tests.
- If the test is given in a large-group setting, administrators may permit students who finish to hand in their test materials (or submit the test if testing on computer) and leave the room. If so, students should exit quietly so they do not disturb any students still working.
- While exact testing times will vary by student, estimated testing times can be found in the [2018 Educator Guides](https://www.engageny.org/resource/test-guides-english-language-arts-and-mathematics). (<https://www.engageny.org/resource/test-guides-english-language-arts-and-mathematics>).

6. What types of questions are asked on the tests?

- The ELA and Math Tests include multiple choice and open-ended questions, which assess grade level learning standards.
- The questions require students to apply their knowledge and, in open-ended responses, explain their reasoning. Students will read texts, write responses, and solve real-world word problems, all of which are foundational skills necessary for success in their next grade.
- The Department will continue to release 75% of test questions. You can view the [2017 released questions](https://www.engageny.org/3-8) at EngageNY (<https://www.engageny.org/3-8>).

7. How are New York State teachers involved in the test development process?

- Hundreds of New York State educators were involved in creating and reviewing questions for the 2018 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests and selecting the questions for the test forms.
- The 2018 tests will feature many questions written by New York State educators. In the future, the goal is to have all test questions written by NYS educators.

8. Are there testing accommodations for students with disabilities?

- Yes, testing accommodations are changes made in the administration of the test that provide an opportunity for students with disabilities to demonstrate mastery of skills and attainment of knowledge without being limited or unfairly restricted due to the effects of a disability. Specific testing accommodations are recommended for individual students by the school's Committee on Special Education (CSE) or Section 504 Committee based on the student's unique needs.
- Testing accommodations must be documented on students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 plans and could include: flexibility in scheduling (e.g., scheduled breaks); flexibility in the test setting (e.g., separate location); changes in test presentation (e.g., enlarged print); and changes in the method of response (e.g., use of a scribe for written responses).
- Principals are responsible for ensuring that accommodations for students with disabilities are implemented on all State and local tests consistent with the recommendations in the IEP/Section 504 plan and in accordance with Department policy.

9. Do English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners (ELLs/MLLs) who are new to the United States take the Grades 3-8 ELA Tests?

- For the Grades 3-8 ELA Tests, schools are allowed to exempt ELLs/MLLs (including those from Puerto Rico) who, on April 1, 2018, will have been attending school in the U.S. for the first time for less than one year.
- All other ELLs/MLLs are expected to participate in the 2018 Grades 3–8 ELA Tests.

10. Are there testing accommodations for English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners?

- Yes. The school principal may authorize certain testing accommodations to English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners in accordance with their best judgment about the needs of these students. Principals should consult with each student's classroom teacher in making these determinations.
- Testing accommodations could include: for both the ELA and Math Tests, separate location; and bilingual dictionaries and glossaries; and for the Math Tests only, translated editions in Chinese (traditional), Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish; oral translation (for lower-incidence languages); and writing responses in native language.

11. What will I learn from my child's score report?

- The results of the annual assessments will provide information about your child's academic progress and achievement. You can use your child's score report to guide a discussion with your child's teacher(s) about additional supports that may be helpful in school, as well as ways to support your child's learning at home.
- The report will show you how your child did in comparison to other students across the State and how your child scored in specific skill and concept areas. For example, the ELA report gives scores for both reading and writing; the Math report gives scores for the key math concepts for your child's grade level.
- State test results may differ from the information on your child's school report card. Report card grades are cumulative and based on many factors, including class participation, homework, attendance, quizzes, tests, and other instructional activities, all of which are important in determining a child's academic achievement.

12. When will the 2018 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Test results be available?

- As a result of the 2018 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests being shortened from three sessions to two, New York State educators must review the performance standards after the tests are administered and scored.
- This process, called standard setting, means that statewide results will not be ready until mid-September.

13. How will the 2018 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Test results be used?

- The results can be used to see how schools, districts, and the State overall are progressing with the State learning standards. The 2017 scores for your school/district are available on the [Department's public data](https://data.nysed.gov/) site: <https://data.nysed.gov/>.
- However, State law and Regulations of the Education Commissioner prohibit districts from making promotion or placement decisions for students based solely or primarily on their performance on the Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests.
- Additionally, results from the 2018 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests cannot be used to evaluate teachers.

14. How long are the 2018 Grades 3-8 ELA and Math Tests?

- This year, both the ELA and Mathematics tests are reduced to only two days each, resulting in substantially fewer questions on the tests than in recent years.
- For example, the 2018 Grade 4 ELA Test is comprised of 7 passages, 24 multiple-choice questions, 6 short-response questions, and 1 extended-response question, whereas the 2017 Grade 4 ELA Test was comprised of 10 passages, 31 multiple-choice questions, 7 short-response questions, and 2 extended-response questions. Each of the 2018 ELA tests includes only one 4-point extended-response question, whereas each of the 2017 ELA tests included two. As with the past few years, this year's exams are untimed.
- As we have over the past several years, we welcome all feedback from parents, teachers and others on this year's exams and will use it to make improvements to future years' tests.