

NYS Testing Overview

Grades 3-5

In 2001, the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act* was signed into law by President Bush. States like New York that receive federal funding are required by the law to *annually* test *all* students in Grades 3-8 in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. Our students are formally tested in these subject areas on standardized tests provided by the State Education Department.

WHY ALL THIS TESTING?

There are some very important reasons for such an extensive testing program:

- To evaluate the implementation of the State's Learning Standards (what students should know and be able to do)
- To measure yearly student progress
- To provide information about a student's preparedness for study at the next level
- To help schools identify students for whom they need to provide additional academic assistance
- To help schools measure the effectiveness of their instructional programs.

It is important to note that the assessments are based on the State standards and the core curricula. By the core curricula, we mean the subjects taught in school and/or the materials taught in a particular subject.

HOW WILL THE SCORES BE REPORTED?

The test scores on these new assessments will range from 1 to 4 which will probably be familiar to parents as it is the same scoring system that White Plains uses on our report cards.

A child who receives a score of 1 is considered scoring far below grade level standards; a score of 2 is considered scoring below State standards; a score of 3 is considered meeting grade level standards; and a score of 4 is considered scoring above grade level standards.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE TEST RESULTS?

School districts are required to provide assistance to students who receive a score of 1 or 2 on these tests. In addition, information gathered from the results of the tests will be used to see if schools and districts are making adequate yearly progress toward the achievement goals determined by the State.

Schools that meet or exceed these goals will be considered for State achievement awards, while schools that fail to meet these goals will be targeted for improvement and must develop assistance plans.

WHEN WILL THE TESTS BE GIVEN?

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Test</u>	<u>Date(s) of the Test</u>
3	NYS English Language Arts Test	April 26 - 28
3	NYS Mathematics Test	May 5 - 7
4	NYS English Language Arts Test	April 26 - 28
4	NYS Mathematics Test	May 5 - 7
4	NYS Science Performance Test	May 24 - June 3
4	NYS Science Written Test	June 7
5	NYS Social Studies Test	November 16 - 17
5	NYS English Language Arts Test	April 26 - 28
5	NYS Mathematics Test	May 5 - 7

HOW LONG ARE THE TESTS?

Some tests take place in one session and others include several sessions which vary in time from 30 minutes to over an hour.

WHEN WILL PARENTS FIND OUT HOW THEIR CHILDREN PERFORMED ON THE TESTS?

The State typically takes between three to six months to process the tests and send us the results. We plan to let parents know how well their child performed on the test after we receive the information from the State.

DOES WHITE PLAINS CONDUCT ITS OWN TESTING?

In addition to the State tests, our students are assessed in many other ways throughout the year. Practice tests, unit tests, grade-level tests, classroom quizzes, and subject specific projects are just some of the assessments we use. In English Language Arts, teachers keep records of our students' progress in reading and periodically collect writing samples. Students are assessed by the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) twice a year.

TESTING, TESTING, TESTING...IS THAT ALL WE DO?

The previous section describes the important role that assessment plays in our school system. But it's not all we do in White Plains.

We are fortunate to have a very rich curriculum that extends and enhances the standards established by the State. Our offerings reflect our belief that students who leave White Plains should be not only well-educated but also well-rounded individuals. We offer enrichment opportunities during the school year in and outside the classroom and our winter and summer Enrichment Institutes are a value-added component to the school experience for our elementary and middle school-age students.

Our foreign language curriculum which now includes five languages as well as our arts, technology, and physical education curricula is interesting and challenging. Take a quick look at our high school course catalog and you would think you were looking at a college catalog. The number and breadth of courses available to our students is indeed impressive.

So, our students really don't spend all their time taking tests, they spend their time learning, exploring, and discovering a wide range of information while in our schools.

MORE INFORMATION?

- * Your child's teacher
- * Principal of your child's school
- * New York State Education Department's website:

<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/3-8/home.html>

<http://usny.nysed.gov/parents/>

HOW CAN PARENTS PREPARE THEIR CHILDREN FOR THE TESTING?

Parents can best ready their children for testing days in the same ways that they support their learning throughout the school year. Here are a few tips:

- Parents should make sure their children attend school every day ready to work – good attendance and getting to school on time, together with a good night's sleep and nutritious breakfast, are great starts.
- Parents should attend parent/teacher conferences and other activities at school to learn what they can do to help their child do well on the tests.
- Parents should limit their children's TV viewing and the amount of time spent on computer and video games.
- Parents should make sure that their children complete homework and long-term assignments on time and thoroughly.
- When watching TV with their children, parents should talk to them about the show or the commercial they're watching.
- Parents should encourage their children to read every day – no exceptions! – and should talk with them about what they've read.
- Parents should frequently read out loud to their children – regardless of their child's age. It is fun for the children and is good preparation for the tests, especially if parents ask them questions about the reading material.
- Parents should use household chores such as cooking, shopping, etc. as opportunities for reinforcing reading and math learning.
- Parents should contact their children's teachers right away if they feel their children do not understand something they're being taught.
- And finally, if parents are relaxed about the tests, it is more likely that their children will be, too!