

Preparing for the tests

Kids can't "cram" for these tests. The best way for parents to help is to introduce fun activities and study habits at home that will strengthen their children's abilities in these key subject areas:

Reading, writing and listening:

- Have your child explain information from a newspaper or magazine article.
- Encourage your child to keep a journal.
- When watching a television commercial, ask your child to separate fact from fiction.
- Play word games during car trips.
- Read aloud with your child, alternating paragraphs. This helps motivate your child to complete assignments and helps you monitor progress in reading.
- Help your child get started on a writing assignment by asking relevant questions. This helps a child internalize the questions writers ask themselves when composing a piece.

Mathematics:

- Demonstrate the everyday uses of math. Let your child tally your spending while shopping, calculate the savings on a sale item or help estimate how many gallons of paint you need to cover the living room walls.
- While driving or walking, have your child identify the geometric shape of common items that you see.
- Ask your child to help put together a budget for a family vacation, calculating what you might spend for gasoline, accommodations and activities.

For more information . . .

- Your child's teacher is the first source for help and advice.
- NYSUT's Web site, www.nysut.org/prek-12educators, offers State Education Department alerts, including a test schedule and links to sample questions.
- Participate in your local parent-teacher association and attend school events. Parents and teachers need to work together to make sure our children get the time, extra help and resources they need to meet more challenging academic standards.



FOR PARENTS

What you need to know about the grades 3-8 testing

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Why does my child have to take these tests?

Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, states that receive federal funding for education must test all students in grades 3 through 8 annually in math and English language arts.

Test results will determine if a school is making Adequate Yearly Progress toward student achievement goals determined by the state.

When will the tests be given?

For 2009-10, testing has been moved later in the school year. Grades 3-8 ELA tests will be administered April 26-28. Grades 3-8 mathematics will be administered May 5-7.

What's on the tests?

In ELA, students may be asked to:

- Listen to a story, take notes and answer questions about what they have just heard.
- Answer questions about a passage they have read.
- Write an essay about a story they have heard and read.

In math, students must:

- Answer multiple-choice questions.
- Answer open-ended questions that require them to show how they arrived at their answer.
- Read and interpret graphs and tables.
- Recognize and use signs, symbols and terms that represent mathematical concepts.

How will the tests be scored?

Scores will range from 1 to 4. A score of 1 or 2 is considered below the state proficiency level; a score of 3 is proficient; a score of 4 is highly proficient. ELA and math test results are scheduled to be available to schools by the end of the school year. Tests will be scored by teachers and approved scorers.

What if my child does poorly?

Children who score a 1 or a 2 are entitled to receive extra help, known as Academic Intervention Services (AIS). Principals must contact parents of those students in writing, and your school district is responsible for providing extra help to your child. That could include extra help during the school day, tutoring before or after school, or summer school. How your district provides this help is spelled out in the district's AIS plan.

Can a child who scores below the proficiency level on a state test be held back?

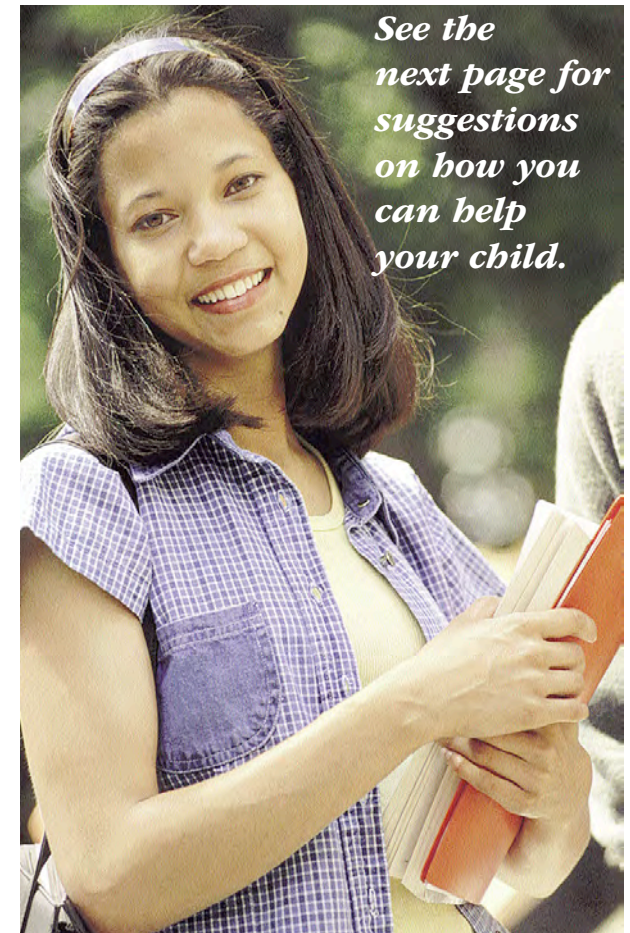
The tests help identify students needing additional help in meeting state standards. Districts use them, together with your child's classroom performance and your input, to decide whether your child is ready to be promoted. Because they are only one indicator of a student's performance, the tests alone should not be used to decide whether your child is promoted. Ask your school for a copy of its promotion policy.

Do students with disabilities take the tests?

Students with disabilities are expected to take the state's regular ELA and math tests. At Individualized Education Program team meetings, you have the opportunity to discuss the tests and whether your child might be allowed accommodations in how the tests are given. Students with severe disabilities may take the state's alternate state tests instead of the regular state tests.

What about English language learners?

English language learners who have been in the state for a year or more are expected to take the 3-8 ELA tests. ELLs with or without disabilities also will be afforded the appropriate accommodations. The 3-8 math tests are translated into five languages. ELLs also may use a glossary or have the questions translated into their native language.



See the next page for suggestions on how you can help your child.