

New York State United Teachers **Guide to the New Standards**
FOR PARENTS: Grade 4 ELA test



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What you need to know about the **Grade 4 ELA test**

A publication of New York State United Teachers, the people who help New York to learn.

For more information, visit us online at www.nysut.org.



Why does my child have to take this test?

New York state is moving toward higher academic standards for all students, from kindergarten through high school. To measure how students are doing, and to provide extra help to children who need it, the state tests students in fourth and eighth grade, and in high school. All students eventually must pass Regents Exams in several subjects to graduate from high school.

The Elementary English Language Arts Assessment, also known as the Grade 4 ELA test, is designed to measure how well your child can read, write and listen. Kids sometimes call it "the reading test," but it covers more than reading.

When will the test be given?

The Grade 4 ELA test typically is given in late January or early February over a three-day period. Check with your child's teacher for exact times.

What's on the test?

Fourth-graders will be asked to:

- Listen to the teacher read a story aloud, write answers to questions about what they have just heard, and write a composition based on those answers.
- Write an original story on a given topic.
- Read two stories, answer questions on both and write a composition based on those answers.



Students must:

- Write clear, complete responses.
- Interpret and draw conclusions from an article, graph or illustration.
- Analyze and explain how one reading relates to other readings.
- Use correct English, including grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation.

How will the test be scored?

Scores on the test will range from 1 to 4. A score of 1 or 2 is considered below the state standard; a score of 3 is proficient; a score of 4 is highly proficient. Results usually are available in late spring.

What happens if my child gets a low score?

Children who score a 1 or a 2 on the test are entitled to receive extra help. Principals must contact parents of students who score a 1 or 2, and your school district is responsible for providing extra help to your child. That could include before- or after-school tutoring, extra help during the school day, or summer school. The way your district will provide this additional assistance is spelled out in a district plan, called the Academic Intervention Services plan.

If my child gets a low score on the ELA test, will my child be held back?

The state ELA test helps identify students who will need additional assistance in meeting state standards. Districts use the test, together with your child's classroom performance and parents' input, to decide whether your child is ready to be promoted. The test alone should not be used to decide whether your child is promoted to the fifth grade.

Do students with disabilities take the Grade 4 ELA test?

In general, students with disabilities are expected to take state tests, including the Grade 4 ELA test. At Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, you have the opportunity to discuss the test and whether your child might be allowed modifications in how the test is given because of a disability. Your district's Committee on Special Education would determine whether modifications - such as more time to take the test - are appropriate.

How can I help my child?

Research has shown that there are some good ways to help children learn:

- Limit their television viewing (and use of computer and video games).
- Encourage children to talk with friends and family members about what they are reading.
- Require your children to complete homework assignments, and challenge them to respond in

detail to writing assignments.

- Have frequent discussions with your children about their studies. Research shows that home discussions about studies are associated with high levels of student achievement.

Preparing for the test

Kids can't "cram" for the grade 4 test. They actually prepare for this test throughout grades K-3. The best way for parents to help is to introduce fun activities and habits at home that will strengthen your child's abilities in reading, writing and listening.

Here are some other helpful hints:

- When watching a television commercial, ask your child to separate fact from fiction.
- Have your child explain information from a cartoon or a newspaper or magazine article.
- Encourage your child to keep a journal.
- Leave messages around the house and have your child write back.
- 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 child internalize the questions writers ask themselves when composing a piece.



Read to and with your child. Ask:

- What is the story/article about?
- How would you describe the main character?
- How did this character change your ideas?
- Is this story similar to or different from your own experience?
- What caused this event to happen?
- What's going to happen next?

For more information

- Your child's teacher is a good source of help and advice.
- New York State United Teachers, the statewide union dedicated to helping New York to learn has a Web site with news and helpful information on the new state tests and standards. Go to www.nysut.org.
- Participate in your local parent-teacher organization 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 the new, higher state standards.

This information brought to you by New York State United Teachers, the people who help New York to learn. New York State United Teachers is the statewide union that represents more than 460,000 pre-K-12 teachers, school-related personnel, higher education professionals and other professionals in education and health care.

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