

Elementary School Academic Policy Guide



Introduction

Dear Colleagues,

As part of our daily work to prepare our students for high school and beyond, we are required to adhere to important policies that govern the design and implementation of students' academic programs. These policies help ensure that all students have access to a robust program of academic experiences that prepare them for success in high school and beyond. This guide compiles relevant State and City policies, as well as links to related supplementary resources, into one reference tool.

I became intimately familiar with the academic policy guide during my years as a principal. Each day, our school community focused on delivering strong instruction and engaging curricula that met or exceeded State standards. But when questions came up about exactly what those requirements were, or the appropriate ways to track student progress, I found that referring to this guide allowed me to quickly find the answers I needed so that I could focus my energy on teaching and learning.

Schools should continue to use this guide as a resource as they program students, maintain student records, and ensure that students are provided with the opportunities they are entitled to in order to graduate ready for college and careers in the 21st century.

I encourage you and your staff to refer to this guide as you develop your academic programs for the school year. This guide, as well as additional resources on policies pertaining to academic requirements and programming, can be found on the Department of Education's [academic policy and systems intranet page](#). Please contact your [academic policy and systems lead](#) for additional guidance on any of the topics described in these resources, and refer to [Principals' Weekly](#) for updates on additional programming and grade reporting processes.

As always, thank you for your hard work to offer our students a rich educational experience.

Sincerely,

Phil Weinberg

Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning

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I. ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

The New York State Education Department’s (NYSED’s) Commissioner’s Regulations, New York City Department of Education’s (NYCDOE’s) Chancellor’s Regulations, and supplementary [academic policy resources](#) provide guidance on policies pertaining to students in elementary school grades, including program requirements, assessments, grading, and promotion. Elementary schools also serving middle and high school grades should refer to the [Middle](#) and [High School](#) Academic Policy Guides for information applicable to these grade levels.

For academic policy and systems questions, schools can refer to the [OAPS intranet page](#) or contact their [academic policy and systems lead](#).

The [STARS](#) suite of applications is the NYCDOE’s official record of students’ programs, grades, and progress toward completing academic requirements.¹ STARS reflects academic information for all NYCDOE public school students in grades K–12. STARS data also reflects schools’ alignment to the New York State and New York City academic policies described in this guide. All elementary schools must use STARS Classroom to enter information about the instruction and supports students in elementary grades are receiving throughout the school day; to reflect student-teacher-subject relationships; and to enter student report card grades. To ensure that STARS data accurately captures students’ academic programs and outcomes, schools should follow the guidelines described on the [STARS wiki](#). STARS is managed by the NYCDOE’s Office of Academic Policy & Systems. See the section of this guide on [programming in STARS](#) and visit the [STARS wiki](#) for more information.

A. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

NYSED’s [Part 100.3](#) and [Part 100.4](#) define the program requirements for students in elementary grades. The sections below outline the program requirements for grades K–5. These represent the academic program that a student in a public elementary school in New York State is entitled to receive. At minimum, the expectation is that each student in elementary school will receive instruction in—and be programmed in STARS Classroom for—the following, every year:

- English language arts (ELA)
- Math
- Science
- Social studies
- The arts (including dance, music, theatre, and visual arts)
- Physical education
- Health

Schools may exceed the requirements described here and offer supplementary experiences that will enhance students’ educational experiences in the elementary years and prepare them for the rigor of middle and high school coursework. Elementary schools also serving middle and high school grades should refer to the [Middle](#) and [High School](#) Academic Policy Guides for information applicable to these grade levels.

There are no specific instructional time requirements in these areas with the exception of [physical education and health](#), and where student need is established, [bilingual education and/or English as a new language instruction](#). Schools can choose to deliver instruction in each academic area every day, rotate through subjects during the week, or implement another scheduling model. This flexibility allows schools to provide an academic program that best meets students’ needs.

1. Kindergarten

Schools must provide students in kindergarten with instruction aligned to [New York State learning standards](#) which “ensures continuity with instruction in the early elementary grades and is integrated with the instructional program in grades one through twelve” according to [Part 100.3](#).

¹ The STARS Suite includes three platforms across grades K–12, including STARS Classroom, Client, and Admin.

This instruction must include, at minimum, instruction in the following subjects every year:

- English Language Arts (i.e. early literacy and emergent reading);
- Mathematics;
- Science;
- Social studies;
- The arts, including dance, music, theatre and visual arts;
- Physical education, as described in [Part 135.4](#);
- Health education, as described in [Part 135.3](#); and
- Where student need is established, bilingual education and/or English as a new language instruction per [Part 154](#).

In addition, programming and instruction should be based on the ages, interests, skills, and needs of the children served and should include:²

- Differentiated instruction to support the acquisition of new concepts and skills;
- Materials and equipment which allow for active and quiet play in indoor and outdoor environments;
- Opportunities for participation in inquiry-based activities and projects; and
- Opportunities to use a wide variety of information in print and electronic mediums.

2. Grades 1–5

In grades 1–5, elementary schools must provide students with instruction aligned to [New York State learning standards](#). There are no specific instructional time requirements in these areas with the exception of physical education and health and where student need is established, bilingual education and/or English as a new language instruction. Instruction in the following subjects must be provided every year:

- English language arts (ELA);
- Mathematics;
- Science and technology;
- Social studies, including geography and United States history;
- The arts, including dance, music, theatre and visual arts;
- Physical education, as described in [Part 135.4](#);
- Health education, as described in [Part 135.3](#);
- Family and consumer sciences;³
- Career development and occupational studies;⁴ and
- Where student need is established, bilingual education and/or English as a new language instruction.

3. Languages Other Than English (LOTE) and Home Language Arts (HLA)—Updated September 2016

Elementary schools have the option to offer Languages other than English (LOTE), also known as foreign language instruction, world languages, and/or home language arts (HLA) instruction, at any grade level.⁵

According to NYSED requirements, schools must provide all students with at least one unit (108 hours) of LOTE instruction by the end of grade 8. While this requirement is typically satisfied in middle school, it may be satisfied in elementary school as well. See the [LOTE FAQ](#) for more detailed information.

² An educational program for kindergarten is based on an understanding, from research and practice, of how young children develop physically, socially, emotionally, linguistically, culturally, and intellectually. See [this](#) guidance from NYSED for more information.

³ Instruction may be integrated into other subjects.

⁴ Instructional standards for the elementary level for career development and occupational studies (or CDOS) can be found [here](#). These are often integrated into English language arts, social studies, and other subjects in elementary school.

⁵ Native language arts (NLA) is also referred to as home language arts (HLA). See the [English Language Learner Policy and Reference Guide](#) for more information.

In addition, schools providing dual language or transitional bilingual education programs for English language learners (ELLs) must also provide standalone instruction in HLA as described in [Part 154](#). These courses may also satisfy the LOTE requirement. See also the sections of this guide on [ELLs](#) and [STARS programming](#) and the [English Language Learner Policy and Reference Guide](#) for information on HLA instruction in ELL programs.

4. Physical Education and Health—Updated September 2016

[Part 135.3](#) and [135.4](#) define the minimum requirements for physical education (PE) and health education instruction, including a minimum of five required annual HIV/AIDS lessons for students in grades K–6.

Physical Education: Students in grades K–5 must participate in an instructional PE program for at least 120 minutes a week. In grades K–3, students must take PE daily, and in grades 4–5 students must take PE no fewer than three times per week. Time for dressing and traveling to an off-site facility may not be counted toward the instructional time requirement for PE. Schools cannot count recess toward the instructional requirement for PE.

Summary of PE time and frequency requirements			
Grade Level	Which PE policies apply?	Minimum required PE time	Minimum required PE frequency
Grades K–3	Elementary school policies for grades K–3	120 minutes per week	Daily, in every term ⁶
Grades 4–5	Elementary school policies for grades 4–6	120 minutes per week	No fewer than 3 times per week, in every term
Grade 6 ⁷ in a K–6, K–8, K–12 school	Elementary school policies for grades 4–6	120 minutes per week	No fewer than 3 times per week, in every term

At a minimum, PE programs must meet [NYSED PE learning standards](#) at the elementary school level. The NYCDOE highly recommends that all elementary PE be taught by a certified PE teacher; however, per [Part 135.4\(4\)\(i\)](#), elementary classroom teachers may provide instruction under the guidance of a certified PE teacher in the building.

As in all other courses, grading for PE must be based primarily on content area knowledge and skills and not on non-mastery measures. Students may not be graded solely on attendance, participation, or preparedness. See the [Grading Policy: Frequently Asked Questions and Checklist](#) for more details.

NYSED PE & Health Learning Standards

1. [Personal Health and Fitness](#)
2. [A Safe and Healthy Environment](#)
3. [Resource Management](#)

[NYC FITNESSGRAM](#) is the City’s annual health-related fitness assessment. Schools must complete this assessment for all eligible students each year as part of their PE program; however, performance on this assessment cannot be used to determine student grades.

The [Move-to-Improve](#) (MTI) Physical Activity Program is a classroom-based program designed to supplement existing physical education programs in elementary schools. Schools with a comprehensive PE program, led by a certified or designated PE teacher, have the opportunity to become an MTI All-Star school by training at least 85% of their eligible teachers in MTI. Only designated ‘All Star Schools’ may use MTI as part of their PE program to help meet the required 120 minutes of PE instruction, in conjunction with regularly scheduled physical education classes. MTI can be used to supplement up to 40 minutes of PE time requirements, but it cannot replace an instructional PE program. For more information about this program, contact the [Office of School Wellness Programs](#).

There are no waivers or exemptions from PE requirements in elementary school. Students with chronic or temporary medical conditions or disabilities must participate in physical education. Students with temporary medical conditions

⁶ The majority of elementary schools in the NYCDOE use an annual term model; however, regardless of the school’s term model, students must take PE consistently every school year.

⁷ Notably, K–6, K–8, or K–12 schools serving grade 6 students should ensure that grade 6 students follow the elementary school requirements rather than the middle school requirements. This allows for continuity in scheduling across grades K–6. For more information see the [PE FAQ](#).

must provide the school with a medical certificate of limitation that indicates the area of the PE program in which the pupil may participate. Students with chronic medical conditions or disabilities documented by a Section 504 Plan or IEP must participate in PE in the least restrictive environment, including general PE or an adapted physical education (APE) program if necessary, as indicated on their IEPs or 504 plans.

Health Education: Elementary schools must provide an age-appropriate, sequential comprehensive health education program, aligned to [NYSED health education learning standards](#), to all students in grades K–5 every year.⁸ There is no specific number of instructional minutes required each year for elementary health education. In addition, NYSED requires that every student receive five HIV/AIDS lessons each year. Health education and HIV/AIDS lessons in elementary school may be taught by certified health education teachers or classroom teachers.

Students may be exempted or “opt out” of only those HIV/AIDS lessons that include methods of prevention. All students are required to receive instruction about the nature of the disease and methods of transmission. The NYCDOE designates “opt out” lessons for each grade level in a provided HIV/AIDS curriculum [here](#).

For more information on academic policies and STARS programming for physical and health education courses, schools should contact their [academic policy and systems lead](#). For guidance on the implementation of physical and health education instructional programs, contact the [Office of School Wellness Programs](#).

5. The Arts

The NYSED’s Arts requirements are described in [Part 100.3](#) and [100.4](#) and in further detail on the [Arts Curriculum and Instruction](#) webpage.

All students in grades pre-K–5 must receive instruction designed to facilitate their attainment of the NYSED elementary [learning standards](#) in visual arts, music, dance and theatre each year; it is recommended, but not required, that certified arts teachers provide elementary level instruction. If the classroom teacher alone provides the instruction, he or she must still address the arts learning standards. The table below provides additional details about recommendations in the arts.

Grades	Additional details and recommendations
Kindergarten	The instructional program for kindergarten shall be based on the ages, interests, strengths and needs of the children. Learning experiences in such programs includes instruction in the content areas of the arts, including dance, music, theatre and visual arts designed to facilitate student attainment of NYSED learning standards.
Grades 1–3	NYSED recommends that schools allocate 20% of the weekly instructional time equally to dance, music, theatre and visual arts. For schools following a standard five-hour instructional day (excluding lunch and after-school activities), this equals five hours of arts instruction per week.
Grades 4–5	NYSED recommends that schools allocate 10% of the weekly instructional time equally to dance, music, theatre and visual arts. For schools following a standard five-hour instructional day (excluding lunch and after-school activities), this equals two and a half hours of arts instruction per week.

For music, in grades K–5, all students should receive instruction in classroom general music aligned to the [learning standards for the arts](#). In order to meet the comprehensive set of knowledge, skills and understandings in music outlined by the standards, students must receive classroom general music instruction. Band, chorus and orchestra are skill development activities offered as electives for students demonstrating interest in instrumental and/or vocal music. Performing groups are an important part of a well-balanced music program but cannot stand alone as a student’s music education experience at the elementary level.

⁸ Comprehensive health education emphasizes skill development around multiple dimensions of health, including physical, mental, emotional, and social health. It also includes these essential content areas: physical activity and nutrition; HIV/AIDS; sexual risk; family life/sexual health; tobacco; alcohol and other drugs; unintentional injury; violence prevention; and other required health areas. For more information, see [NYSED’s Guidance for Achieving New York State Standards in Health Education](#) or contact the [Office of School Wellness Programs](#).

6. Academic Intervention Services (AIS) —Updated September 2016

[Part 100.2\(ee\)](#) defines schools' responsibility for providing Academic Intervention Services (AIS) to students at all grade levels. AIS is defined as "additional instruction which supplements the instruction provided in the general curriculum and assists students in meeting the State learning standards ... and/or student support services which may include guidance, counseling, attendance, and study skills which are needed to support improved academic performance."

Effective July 27, 2016 NYSED has approved amendments to Part 100.2 that delineate a two-step process for identifying students who are eligible for AIS. In grades 3–8, principals must provide AIS to students who demonstrate need, as follows:

- First, schools must identify all students, including students with disabilities and ELLs, who scored below the State-designated performance level on one or more of the State elementary assessments in ELA or math. Students who score below the median scale score between level 2 and level 3 are preliminarily eligible for AIS.⁹
- Then, using additional assessments, schools may make local determinations about which students will most benefit from AIS. Schools must apply the same assessments uniformly across any given grade.

For more information, see the [NYSED memo](#) on this regulatory change.

Parents or guardians of students who have been identified to receive AIS must be notified, in writing, by the principal in English and in the preferred language or mode of communication of the parent, where appropriate. The principal must inform the family of the services the student will receive, the reason the student needs such services, and the consequences of not achieving expected performance levels. Ongoing communication regarding the students' AIS progress must include:

- An opportunity to consult with the student's regular classroom teacher(s), and other professional staff providing academic intervention services, at least once per semester during the regular school year;
- Reports on the student's progress at least once each quarter during the regular school year; and
- Information on ways to work with the student to improve achievement, monitor his or her progress, and work with educators.
- Parents or guardians also must be notified when AIS ends.

7. Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a multi-tiered instruction and intervention model that promotes early identification of students in need of additional support through the provision of research- and evidence-based instruction and intervention, along with protocols for assessment that include universal screening and ongoing progress monitoring. RtI is designed to provide all students with access to high-quality, effective, research-based instruction and differentiated supports with a goal of ensuring that referrals for evaluation and possible referral to special education are accurate.

At the start of the RtI process, all students are screened each academic year—typically in early fall and up to two additional times during the school year—to determine whether they are at risk for not meeting standards. RtI is currently required in NYCDOE schools in grades K–5 in literacy. Students demonstrating patterns of concern in the screening process are provided with increasingly intensive interventions, as needed, with the goal of academic recovery in reading. Student performance is regularly monitored at all tiers of RtI service to assist school staff in determining whether students are making adequate progress and to ensure that interventions and supports are adjusted accordingly based on evidenced student needs.

Students who do not make progress in Tier I (in the classroom) are provided with additional instructional support in Tiers II and/or III. This can mean more time (frequency and/or duration), smaller group size or individual instruction, or a more intensive focus on the specific area(s) in which the student is having difficulty.

In Tier II intervention, students receive intervention in addition to regular classroom instruction. Typically, the student is taught in a small group, receiving additional instructional time and/or taught using more intensive, research-based techniques.

⁹ This procedure may also include diagnostic screening for vision, hearing, and physical disabilities.

In Tier III intervention, the student receives more frequent and intensive support than in Tiers I or II, sometimes on an individual basis.

For more information on interventions in Tiers I, II, and III, screening, progress monitoring, and other processes, see the NYCDOE's [RtI FAQs](#) and the [RtI Reference Guide](#).

B. REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS

1. New York State Tests in English, Math, and Science

Each year, students in grades 3–8 in New York participate in NYSED [ELA and math tests](#). Students in grade 4 and 8 also participate in the [NYSED science tests](#).

Schools administer New York State ELA and math tests to students according to their grade level. Students with disabilities (those with Individualized Education Programs or Section 504 Plans) and [ELLs](#) may be eligible to receive testing accommodations on these assessments. Schools must base the decision to provide testing accommodations on students' individual needs, and the accommodations must directly address the student's documented diagnosis, disability, or language need. See the [testing accommodations](#) section for more information.

The following students in grades 3–5 are exempt from some or all of these tests:

- Students who participate in the New York State Alternative Assessment (NYSAA);
- ELLs, including students from Puerto Rico, who, as of April 1 of the year in which the Common Core ELA exam is administered, have been attending school in the United States for less than one year.
 - Recently arrived ELLs may be eligible for one, and only one, exemption from the administration of New York State ELA Exam in grades 3–8.
 - Schools may administer the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) in lieu of the New York State ELA Exam, for participation purposes only, to recently arrived ELLs who meet the criteria above. All other ELLs must participate in the New York State ELA Exam and the NYSESLAT. See the [English Language Learner Policy and Reference Guide](#).
 - Elementary schools also serving middle school grades should refer to the [Middle School Academic Policy Guide](#) for information on exemptions from taking the NYSED math and science exams for students participating in accelerated course.

C. PROMOTION

Promotion standards are the academic benchmarks students must meet in order to be promoted to the next grade level at the end of the school year. Throughout the year, teachers and principals regularly review academic performance and identify students who, even with additional support, are at risk of not meeting promotion standards for their grade level. Students' academic progress is assessed holistically, using multiple measures, such as NYSED test scores, course grades and report cards, writing samples, projects, assignments, and other performance-based student work. While NYSED test scores may be considered, they may not be the determining factor in assessing a student's readiness for the next grade.¹⁰ Promotion standards are defined in Chancellor's Regulation [A-501](#).

Students are held to different promotion standards based on their grade levels, the criteria specified on their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and/or their English language learner (ELL) status. The following groups of students are not held to the promotion standards outlined in [A-501](#):

- Students in pre-kindergarten;
- ELLs in grades 3–7 who have been enrolled in a United States school system (USSS) for fewer than two years;
- ELLs in grade 8 who have been enrolled in a USSS for less than one year; and
- Students with IEPs who do not participate in the standard NYSED ELA and math tests (i.e. students with IEPs who participate in alternate assessments, such as the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA)).

¹⁰ See this [historical FAQ document](#) for additional information on the change in promotion policy and process that occurred in school year 2013–14.

The promotion process includes multiple steps throughout the year, described in greater detail in the [Promotion Guide](#):

- At the beginning of the school year, schools establish the multiple measures that will be used to assess students' progress at each grade level.
- In the fall, parent teacher conferences and report cards provide early notice of how students are progressing.
- In January, schools identify students who are at risk of not meeting promotion benchmarks and may be retained in the same grade next year (i.e. promotion in doubt).
- In February, schools send written notice (via [promotion in doubt letters](#)) to students and families who may be in danger of not meeting the benchmarks for their grade level.
- In the spring, report cards and parent teacher conferences keep families and students aware of their progress and expected promotion decision.
- In June, schools make [promotion decisions](#), which they communicate via letters to families.
- In July, students attend summer school.
- In [August](#), schools make any remaining promotional decisions and families receive written notice. Families may appeal these decisions, in writing. The superintendent makes the final determination.

See the [Promotion Guide](#) and the [Principals' Portal Promotion page](#) for information on how to implement the promotion process throughout the school year. For information on how promotion criteria should be determined, applied and evaluated for students with disabilities, refer to the [Promotion Criteria Guidelines for Students with Disabilities in Grades 3–8](#).

D. PARTICIPATION IN MOVING UP CEREMONIES

If an elementary school student does not meet [promotion requirements](#) in June, the principal and parent can decide together if the student should participate in a moving up or graduation ceremony. Schools should obtain written consent from families explicitly stating they understand participation in June graduation or stepping up ceremonies does not mean their child will be promoted.

A school may prohibit a student who is already on suspension at the time of the graduation or other commencement-related activities from attending when he or she poses a real threat of violence or disruption to the event; the exclusion must be proportionate to the infraction committed. It may also be possible to bar a student from a commencement ceremony when his or her conduct has been particularly egregious, and where school has previously advised the student and/or family in writing.¹¹

II. POLICIES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

A. ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs)

Policies regarding English Language Learners (ELLs) are defined in [Part 154](#). Students are identified as ELLs based on the results of the New York State Identification Test for ELLs ([NYSITELL](#)). For additional information on ELL identification and placement, including Students with Interrupted Education (SIFE), see the [English Language Learners Policy and Reference Guide](#).

Once a student has been identified as an ELL, parent choice drives program placement. ELL parents view an [orientation video](#) in their language of choice, which describes the NYCDOE's three program options: Dual Language (DL), Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE), and freestanding English as a New Language (ENL), described further in the [English Language Learner Policy and Reference Guide](#). All parents are entitled to choose among these three options, regardless of whether their child's current school has their program of choice immediately available. The NYCDOE's website offers parents a variety of [resources](#) to better serve ELL students and families.

Schools may not refuse admission to zoned students or students assigned by the NYCDOE's Office of Student Enrollment based on their ELL status or program needs.

¹¹ See [Exclusion from Proms or Graduation Ceremonies](#).

Schools are required to form bilingual programs in grades K–8 when there are 15 or more ELLs with the same language in one grade or in two contiguous grades, for whom parents/guardians chose a bilingual program placement. This threshold is the minimum requirement under the law, but by no means limits schools that choose to open programs with fewer students. For example, when parents request bilingual programs in a small school, the school can pool resources and staffing with other schools (e.g., campus schools and neighboring schools) in order to provide wider access to programs.

For all ELL programs, the number of ENL and Home Language Arts units provided is based on English proficiency and all units must be standards-based. See the [English Language Learner Policy and Reference Guide](#) for additional information.

1. New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL)

The NYSITELL is used to initially identify English Language Learners (ELLs). New entrants whose [Home Language Identification Surveys](#) indicate languages other than English spoken in the home and may have English language acquisition needs take the NYSITELL to determine if they are eligible for of bilingual and/or English as a New Language (ENL) services.¹² Based on NYSITELL results, students are categorized into one of five English proficiency levels:

- Beginner/entering
- Low intermediate/emerging
- Intermediate/transitioning
- Advanced/expanding
- Proficient/commanding

The student’s level of English proficiency determines the number of service hours they receive. More information is available on the [NYSITELL intranet page](#), in [Assessment Memorandum #2](#), and on [NYSED’s website](#). See also the [English Language Learner Policy and Reference Guide](#) for more information on ELL services.

2. New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT)

All ELLs take the NYSESLAT every year to determine how well they are learning English and to determine continued eligibility for ELL services as part of the required annual assessment. The NYSESLAT assesses students’ speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. For more information regarding NYSESLAT administration, see the [English Language Learner Policy and Reference Guide](#).

B. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The NYCDOE seeks to ensure that all students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are provided with access to his or her [least restrictive environment \(LRE\)](#). Students with IEPs, should, regardless of their disability:

- Have access to a rigorous academic curriculum that sets high academic standards, enabling them to fully realize their potential and prepare for middle school;
- Be taught in his or her least restrictive environment, and, as often as possible, alongside students without disabilities;
- Receive special education services that are targeted to their needs and provide the appropriate level of support throughout the school day; and
- Be able to attend their zoned schools or the school of their choice, while still receiving the supplementary services and supports required.

All students with disabilities and their families must feel welcome at every school. The [School Implementation Team \(SIT\)](#) facilitates the strategic planning to ensure that every school communicate appropriately and adequately serves all students. The SIT works with other school teams but is not intended to usurp the function of the school-based [Committee on Special Education \(CSE\)](#).

Schools review each new student’s IEP upon entry. If a child’s IEP recommends programs or services that the school he/she is entering does not currently have, the school should first make it clear to the parents and student that they are committed to providing the programs and services that are recommended on the IEP, beginning on the student’s first

¹² See the [English Language Learner Policy and Reference Guide](#) for additional information on these policies.

day at that school. For questions related to programming for students with disabilities, schools should contact their [Administrator of Special Education \(ASEs\)](#). For other policies related to students with disabilities, see the sections on [testing accommodations](#), [NYSAA](#), and [programming in STARS](#).

1. New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA)

The New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) is an assessment for students with severe cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate in general education assessments only.¹³ It is offered in ELA, math, science and social studies.

Students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) may participate in a variety of assessment programs, depending on their needs and as specified on their IEPs. Student eligibility for NYSAA is determined on a case-by-case basis by the student's Committee on Special Education (CSE), and is documented on a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) in the Special Education Student Information System (SESIS). The student's IEP must clearly state why the student cannot participate in the general assessment program and the rationale for NYSAA eligibility.

NYSAA-eligible students are assessed according to their chronological age and against grade level standards set by NYSED. The ELA and math NYSAA exams are administered each year in grades 3–8 and once in high school. The ELA and math exams are aligned to Common Core learning standards and are assessed using Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) computer-based assessments. The science exam is administered in grades 4 and 8 and once in high school, and the social studies NYSAA is administered once in high school.¹⁴ The science and social studies NYSAA exams measure ability by collecting both baseline and final data points in a datafolio.

See the [Alternate Assessment FAQ](#), [Assessment Memorandum #3](#), and the [students with disabilities](#) section of this guide for more information on NYSAA policies and procedures.

C. TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

Testing accommodations are changes to test format and/or administration procedures to support students in overcoming or working around their disability or English proficiency to demonstrate their skills, knowledge, and abilities. Testing accommodations are intended to remove barriers and increase access to the general education curriculum. Testing accommodations do not change the skill or content that the test is measuring, nor are they intended to make tests less rigorous. Decisions to provide accommodations, as well as the specific accommodations themselves, are made on a case-by-case basis and are highly dependent upon individual student needs.

The following students may be eligible for testing accommodations:

- [Students with disabilities](#), including those with IEPs and Section 504 Plans;
- [ELLs](#) and former ELLs;
 - Former ELLs are eligible to receive these testing accommodations for only an additional two years after testing out of ELL status.
- Occasionally, other students, in emergency situations and with special approval.
 - Students who demonstrate disabilities 30 days or fewer before the administration of a State or district-wide assessment may receive certain testing accommodations if authorized by the principal. For example, a student who breaks his/her arm days before an exam may be approved for a scribe. Such decisions must be carefully documented to [NYSED Office of State Assessment](#) and the [Borough Assessment Implementation Director \(BAID\)](#).

Examples of testing accommodations include:

- Flexible test schedules or time limit extensions;
- Flexible test settings and special locations;
- Method of presentation, test directions, and assistive technology; and

¹³ NYSED defines this as students who have limited cognitive abilities combined with behavioral and/or physical limitations and who require highly-specialized education and/or social, psychological, and medical services in order to maximize their full potential for useful and meaningful participation in society and for self-fulfillment. See [Part 100.1 \(2.\)\(iv.\)](#). There is no one disability that automatically qualifies a student to participate in NYSAA.

¹⁴ Students eligible for NYSAA must be assessed on the grade-appropriate content that is consistent with the student's chronological age.

- Method of test response, content, or physical support.

Schools should determine which testing accommodations benefit each individual ELL and former ELL at the beginning of the school year so that the student becomes familiar with those specific testing accommodations. For students with disabilities, the IEP or Section 504 team should determine which testing accommodations benefit each individual student with a disability at an IEP meeting or 504 meeting, respectively. See the [Testing Accommodations FAQ](#) for more information.

D. HOME AND HOSPITAL INSTRUCTION

Home and hospital instruction programs provide educational services to students who cannot be accommodated in a regular school facility because of a medical or physical condition and/or a severe emotional, psychological, or behavioral disability that prohibits the student from attending school. Home and hospital instruction programs are interim, operated by District 75, that provide academic services to limit the educational effects of a long-term absence.

All students on home or hospital instruction must receive instruction that corresponds to courses required for promotion, as appropriate. Ideally, students receive instruction in courses that mirror their academic program. Elementary school students who receive home or hospital instruction must receive a minimum of five hours of instruction per week, to the extent possible given the student's condition.

Students who apply to and are approved for home instruction must be affiliated with a New York City school. The affiliate school is the public, parochial, or private school that the student will return to after home or hospital instruction has ended. The purpose of affiliation/shared instruction is to support the staff responsible for ensuring continuity of instruction so students remain on track to meet all academic requirements, and to ensure the student maintains a strong connection to the New York City school he/she will return to after home and hospital instruction has ended.

While the affiliate school and home and hospital instruction programs are to form a collaborative relationship and communicate on a regular basis, each school is the primary owner of certain tasks and responsibilities. The affiliate school is primarily responsible for the student's academic programming, while home and hospital instruction programs are primarily responsible for providing instruction. Specific roles and responsibilities are outlined in the [Home and Hospital Instruction Programs: Academic Policy and Systems Guidance](#). These are suggested responsibilities and may change based on the student's expected duration in home or hospital instruction. A change in responsibilities should be coordinated between the affiliate school and the home or hospital instruction program, specific to each student. Keeping an open line of communication is particularly important as students will return to New York City schools after home or hospital instruction has ended.

For information on student eligibility for home instruction, the process for referring a student to home or hospital instruction, and approval for a student to go on home instruction, see Chancellor's Regulation [A-170](#) and the [Home Instruction Schools webpage](#). For information on NYCDOE home and hospital instruction policies and implementation, see the [Home and Hospital Instruction Programs: Academic Policy and Systems Guidance](#).

E. HOME SCHOOLING

When families choose to home school their children, a separate set of policies apply. For more information, see the [Office of Home Schooling website](#) and the [NYSED FAQ](#) on home schooling.

F. TRANSFER STUDENTS AND GRADE PLACEMENT

Policies regarding the placement of transfer students are described in Chancellor's Regulation A-101.

Students entering a NYCDOE school for the first time after having attended school outside the New York City public schools are placed based on the available education records from the student's previous school at the time of enrollment. If the principal deems that another grade placement would be more instructionally appropriate, he or she must consult the superintendent and provide evidence to justify any recommendation. The superintendent will make the final decision concerning the appropriate grade level for the student. For more information about how families entering the NYCDOE enroll in elementary school, see the NYCDOE page on [Choices and Enrollment](#).

Schools are responsible for ensuring that transcripts in a language other than English are translated effectively so that programs can be programmed appropriately. Schools may use school- or community-based translators or the student's

home country Embassy or Consulate for assistance. It is not appropriate for the family members or students to complete the translation, or to be charged for the cost of translation.

The NYCDOE Department of Translation does not translate student-specific documents. As such, it is not appropriate to send foreign transcripts to the Department of Translation. However, schools may use school- or community-based translators. When working with a translation vendor, schools should use the portion of the budget earmarked for translation services. Schools may not pass on the cost of translating these documents to the student or the student's family.

If a student is discharged from a NYCDOE school and returns within the same calendar year (on or before June 30th) the student will be placed based on consideration of the student's grade placement at his or her previous NYC school and the available educational records from the student's last school that are presented at the time of enrollment.

If no records are available, the student will be placed in the same grade level as when he or she was discharged in that school year.

If a student is discharged from the NYCDOE and returns to the NYCDOE in a subsequent school year, the student will be placed the same way as a student enrolling at a NYCDOE school for the first time.

If a student transfers between NYCDOE schools within a school year, the student's grade placement does not change.

NYCDOE elementary schools receiving students from other districts should not record grades or assessment outcomes from the student's previous school in STARS. However, schools should maintain clear policies regarding the extent to which previous academic outcomes factor into final course grades, if at all. This can have implications for the middle school admissions process.

For example, if a student transfers to a NYCDOE school for the first time in the spring of grade 3, the school may choose to incorporate the student's report card grades from the fall semester into the student's final course grades. Alternatively, the school may choose to base the student's final grade only on the work completed by the student at the NYCDOE school in the spring semester.

III. PROGRAMMING AND SYSTEMS POLICIES

A. PROGRAMMING IN STARS

1. Basic Steps to Program Elementary School Students—Updated September 2016

The STARS suite of applications is the NYCDOE's official record of students' programs, grades, and progress toward completing academic requirements. [STARS Classroom](#), together with [STARS Admin](#), comprise the STARS course programming, grade, and report card management software applications for elementary schools. STARS Classroom is an internet-based application that automates the collection of course marks for teachers. Teachers can use this system to view [class rosters](#), access student data, and enter course marks, which will appear on STARS generated student [report cards](#).

All NYCDOE elementary schools are required to enter information into STARS Classroom about the instruction and supports students in elementary grade levels are receiving throughout the school day and year. Elementary school programming information reflects student-teacher-subject relationships in STARS Classroom; it also allows teachers to enter student report card grades into STARS Classroom.

To complete the programming process, schools must first set up their official classes in ATS using the [CMOD](#) function. Only a person administrative access can complete elementary school programming in STARS classroom; for more information see the [STARS Classroom wiki](#). In order to complete basic programming, administrators follow the steps outlined in the following table.

PROGRAMMING STEPS

PROGRAMMING STEPS	
LOG-IN Select School Administrator → Elementary School Programming .	
1	<p><u>SELECT OFFICIAL CLASSES</u></p> <p>Confirm your term model and, for each grade level, select all official classes to program in the elementary grades.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Confirm your term model. In elementary school, the term model is defaulted to annual.¹⁵ ● For each grade level, select all official classes (previously set up in ATS using the CMOD function) that will require programming. These should include all current classes in which students will receive instruction and report card grades from a teacher.
2	<p><u>SET CLASS SUBJECTS</u></p> <p>Provide program information for each official class including subjects, teachers, instructional time, and other subject properties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For each grade level, turn on the subjects in which students are receiving instruction during this class. Indicate the teacher providing instruction in each subject. At this point, the system creates a linkage between the students in the official class, the subjects selected, and the teacher(s). ● If you turn a subject on at this time, you will later have the option of displaying it on a student's STARS report card. If you do not turn on the subject, you will not be able to display it on a student's STARS report card. ● Indicate the instructional time students are receiving in each subject in minutes per week. If the instructional time varies from week to week, provide an estimate that represents the average amount of time spent in each subject. ● Set any other subject properties necessary to provide additional information about the instruction or delivery method. If none of these properties apply, leave these indicators un-checked. Subject properties allow you to provide important additional details about the instruction being delivered, including the language of instruction and if the course is taught using English as a second language strategies.
3	<p><u>PROGRAM STUDENTS INDIVIDUALLY</u> (Where needed)</p> <p>Use this when a student receives a particular subject separately from the rest of the class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use the 'individual student programming' function to override the linkage between the official class, subject, and teacher. Individual student programming creates a new linkage between the selected student, subject, and teacher. ● The individual student programming function is useful if, for example, a student or group of students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Never takes math with the teacher of the official class, but instead always goes to a different math class during that time, to receive instruction from another math teacher, who awards the grade for math. This removes the students from the primary teacher's math subject area and allows the second teacher to report a math grade instead. ○ Receives instruction in a subject that the rest of the official class is not receiving instruction in. This adds the subject and that teacher to the student's program. ○ Leaves the regular PE time to instead take adapted physical education (APE) separately with another teacher who awards the grade. APE would then also be indicated under the subject properties.
4	<p><u>PROGRAM STUDENTS FOR PUSH-IN/</u></p> <p>Use this when a teacher other than the primary teacher(s) delivers additional targeted instruction. More information is available below, in the section of the guide on push-in/pull-out instruction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unlike individual student programming described in step 3 above, the push-in and pull-out instruction function does not override any existing linkages between other teacher(s), subject(s),

¹⁵ A school's term model indicates how frequently students receive final grades and change schedules. While the majority of elementary schools use an annualized schedule and term model, schools may award final grades at other frequencies throughout the year. Within each term, there must be least two marking periods; see the section of this guide on [grading policies](#). For example, an elementary school may maintain relatively consistent schedule throughout the year but award three report cards, including the final report card in June. In this case, the school is still observing an annual term model. Schools with a different term model should contact their [academic policy and systems lead](#). It is not necessary to modify the term model unless your academic program changes significantly at certain times throughout the school year (e.g. your school uses semesters, for example in a K–8 or K–12 school) and final subject grades (not just marking period grades) are awarded to students more than once per year.

<p><u>PULL-OUT INSTRUCTION</u></p> <p>(Where needed)</p>	<p>and that student. Thus, for example, a student who is receiving ELA instruction from the official class teacher, but who also is occasionally pulled out of that ELA for extra help with reading, can be programmed for pull-out instruction in ELA with an additional teacher.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Push-in and pull-out instruction can be used to meet a variety of instructional needs, including, but not limited to, intervention, enrichment, and services for English language learners and students with disabilities. ● The subject in push-in/pull-out must always correspond to the content delivered to the student and ● This would be useful if, for example, a student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is pulled out of the official class to receive AIS in math, science, writing, and/or reading. ○ Receives push-in instruction during a particular subject within the official class from a second teacher, for extra help.
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The following also applies to programming the specific subjects:

- **English language arts:** The overall ELA subject must be turned on, but the other ELA areas of ‘reading’, ‘writing’, and ‘listening, speaking, and language’ are optional. Schools should turn these on if they want to award students separate grades and comments in these areas and/or if they wish to indicate instructional time in these subjects. This is a school-level decision.
 - The ELA overall subject should be inclusive of the time spent in the component areas. For example, if a school indicates that students receive 300 minutes per week in ELA overall, they might indicate that they spend 100 minutes each in the three sub-areas.
- **Response to Intervention (Rti):** Schools should use push-in/pull-out functionality, described in step 4 above, if a student receives Rti (Tier II or III) during another class or subject area. In this case, schools must fill in the total minutes per week students receive in these areas and indicate the teacher providing Rti and the Rti subject.
- **Physical education:** As described in the section of this guide on [physical education](#), schools indicate not just the number of minutes of instruction per week, but also the days per week. In addition:
 - Move to Improve (MTI) All-Star Schools that have a certified PE teacher may include up to 40 minutes of MTI implemented during regular classroom instruction as PE instruction. To reflect this in STARS Classroom, schools should follow the steps on the [STARS classroom wiki page](#).
 - To program Adapted physical education, schools have several options, depending on how the instruction is delivered:
 - The most common way to reflect that students are receiving Adapted PE (APE) in STARS Classroom is to use [push-in/pull-out instruction](#), as described in Step 4 in the table above. If individual students participate in PE with the rest of the class and also receive APE through push-in or pull-out instruction from another teacher, use the push-in/pull-out instruction function to link this student to the second teacher as well.
 - If individual students receive APE separately from the rest of the class, [individually program](#) these students (step 3 above) for PE and indicate it as APE using the subject properties. This overrides any existing student teacher-subject linkage for PE, indicating that instead of receiving PE with the full class, this particular student receives APE with another teacher.
 - If an entire official class receives APE, follow steps 1 and 2 above and set the subject properties of the PE subject to indicate APE. This is appropriate if you schedule a full official class for APE only.
- **Health education:** As described in the section of this guide on [health education](#), schools must indicate the actual number of HIV/AIDS lessons taught throughout the year in the subject properties under health.
- **Arts education:** As described in the section of this guide on [arts education](#), schools must provide instruction in the subjects of music, theatre, dance, and visual arts. These are unique subjects in STARS Classroom. Schools should turn on each of these subjects for each official class (steps 1 and 2 above), indicate the

teacher(s) providing instruction and the instructional time per week. Subject properties also ask the school to identify if a community-based organization (CBO) or cultural organization is providing the arts instruction in collaboration with the teacher. Schools must indicate, in the subject properties, the number of minutes delivered by the organization. This number is a subset of the total instruction.

- **Language instruction:** In STARS Classroom, the subjects of Languages other than English (LOTE) and native/home language arts are connected. If students are receiving any instruction in a language other than English, regardless of whether that language is a home or native language or a new language to the student, the school turns the same subject area on in STARS Classroom. The subject property indicates the actual language of instruction.
 - When an official class has the subject of ‘foreign or native home language arts’ turned on, the subject properties and the student’s home language in ATS indicate whether the course is functioning as LOTE or home/native language arts. If a student’s home language is the same as the language indicated in the subject properties, then the system infers that for this student, the course is home or native language arts. If not, then the subject is LOTE.

2. Push-in/Pull-out Instruction—Updated September 2016

As described in step 4 of [STARS programming](#), push-in and pull-out instruction occur when a teacher other than the primary teacher(s) delivers targeted instruction to a subgroup of students on a regular basis. Push-in and pull-out instruction can be used to meet a variety of instructional needs, including, but not limited to, intervention, enrichment, and services for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Push-in and pull-out instruction must always be programmed in STARS to reflect the content and subjects/codes delivered to students. It must be scheduled to reflect the frequency with which the push-in and pull-out instruction occur. Push-in/pull-out instruction records identify the teacher, the minutes and meet times, the subject of the instruction (using course codes), and any other important properties.

In push-in instruction, an additional teacher instructs a student or subgroup of students within the primary class. The subject indicated will always correspond to the content being delivered.

- Example: A second teacher assists an individual student within the classroom twice per week during ELA to provide additional support with literacy during the lesson.
 - The school creates a push-in record for the student, and indicates that the student is receiving ELA instruction from the second teacher.
- Example: An English as a New Language (ENL)/English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher pushes into another subject area, i.e. math class, to assist one student or a small group of students with their language skills during math.
 - The school creates a push-in instruction record for the student, and indicates that the student is receiving math instruction. They link the ESL teacher, and choose ESL/ENL as a subject property. They also indicate the meet times and start and end date of the service.

In pull-out instruction, a subgroup of students leaves the primary class to receive instruction outside the classroom from a second teacher.

- Example: A second math teacher may pull a targeted group of advanced students out of math class twice per week to deliver more advanced content. The subject indicated will always correspond to the content being delivered.
 - The school creates a push-in record for the students, and indicates that they are receiving math from the second teacher. They also indicate the meet times and start and end date of the service. They may choose to also indicate a subject property of ‘gifted and talented’ if applicable.
- Example: A student’s IEP requires him to receive SETSS in a separate location in math. The student meets with the SETSS teacher during his regularly scheduled math class for 30 minutes in the library.
 - The school creates a pull-out record for the student, and indicates that he is receiving math from the second teacher. They choose the subject property of ‘Teacher Support Services’ and indicate another other appropriate properties, including the start and end date of the services and the meet times.

Integrated co-teaching (ICT) is not considered push-in or pull-out instruction. Instead, this is indicated as a subject property. Schools should use official class programming when ICT is provided. See Step 2 in the section on [STARS programming](#) and the [STARS wiki page](#).

Push-in and pull-out instruction should indicate the subject of the instructional content delivered to students and should be scheduled to reflect the frequency with which push-in and pull-out instruction occur. For details and instructions, see the [STARS wiki page](#).

IV. GRADING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. GRADING POLICIES —Updated September 2016

All schools must document [grading policies](#) that set clear expectations for learning and make them transparent to staff, students, and families. The goal of a documented grading policy is to provide students, families, and teachers a shared understanding of what is required in order to achieve a specific grade. Schools must share their grading policy with parents and students at the beginning of the school year.¹⁶ As part of the process, schools are encouraged to create time for teacher teams to review and discuss policies before they share them. While grading policies should be tailored to a school's community, mission, and goals, all grading policies must explain, at a minimum, how courses are graded, the scale of marks awarded, and the timeline of when students receive grades.

Grades provide feedback to students on their individual understanding of and progression through a course or subject. Schools have discretion in deciding which specific measures are factored into students' grades. However, determinations of passing or failing must be based primarily on how well students master the [learning standards](#), subject matter, concepts, content, and skills addressed in a class or course. This means that students may not pass or fail based solely on non-mastery measures (e.g. behavior, compliance, participation, conduct) but rather based on how well they demonstrate their understanding of the content and skills required in the course. Schools may not maintain quotas of students passing or failing courses. Student performance may result in passing grades for all students in a course, if all students demonstrate mastery of the learning standards addressed. However, a grading policy may not state that, by definition, all students must pass.

Schools may establish grading policies at the school, department, grade, or course level. However, schools must use grades to assess student mastery of the Common Core standards. Grading policies must apply to all students in the school, including [students with disabilities](#) and [ELLs](#).

- For students with disabilities, schools document annual goals, plans for progress monitoring, and promotion criteria in the IEP, while the report card documents progress made in the general education curriculum. All students, including students with disabilities, receive grades based on how well they master the subject matter, concepts, content, and skills addressed in a class or course. The IEP describes specially designed instruction and accommodations for an individual student that used to create access to grade-level standards and enable progress toward annual goals. All students, including students with disabilities, should be working toward grade-level standards.¹⁷ Students' receipt of accommodations does not impact the grade that can be earned. Students with disabilities have the same opportunity to earn grades as all other students.
- Students with disabilities receive progress reports on their annual goals. Progress reports are usually distributed at the same time as report cards and reflect the likelihood that a student will meet their annual goals or has already met their annual goals. Progress reports do not replace report cards for students with disabilities.
- Students with disabilities who participate in alternate assessments receive grades that reflect their mastery of the courses, skills and modified content of the general education curriculum presented. Due to the severity of the students' disabilities, the content of the general education curriculum and instruction needs to be modified to provide the students with access and allow for participation and progress. Modification results in a change in the expectation of what skills the students need to demonstrate that they have

¹⁶ The NYCDOE [Student Bill of Rights](#) and the [Parent Bill of Rights](#) include the rights to know and be provided with written documentation of grading policies and to receive grades based on those policies.

¹⁷ See the United States Department of Education's [Dear Colleague Letter](#).

mastered. To accommodate for the difference in expectation, a school's grading policy should address how students with disabilities who participate in alternate assessment are graded.

- For ELLs, the grading policy should consider the student's English as a Native Language (ENL) proficiency level, and should include opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of the NYSED Learning Standards in their native language.

For more specific details and guidance on how to develop and implement strong grading policies, refer to the [Grading Policy: Frequently Asked Questions and Checklist](#).

B. COURSE MARKS

Schools may choose to award grades using one or more grading scales based on their grading policies. Grading scales available to elementary schools include, but are not limited to, numeric grades (e.g. 1–100), alpha grades (e.g. A–F), and performance levels (1, 2, 3, or 4). Each course mark has a citywide pass/fail equivalent and a default numeric equivalent. See the [appendix](#) for a full list of available course marks.

Schools may determine whether grading scales are set at the school, department, grade, or course level, and can use multiple scales provided they are clearly explained.

- Example: A K–8 school uses a 1–4 grading scale (which awards marks 1, 2, 3, or 4 based on performance level) for students in kindergarten through grade 5 and alpha course grades (A–F scale) for students in grades 6–8.
- Example: An elementary school awards grades to all students using the mastery scale (ME, MA, MT, MP, MB) in all courses.

Schools may also award special course marks in rare instances when grades cannot be awarded:

- **Incompletes:** Schools may award a grade of Incomplete ('NX') if a student has a documented, extreme extenuating circumstance that prevents him/her from completing the subject in its established timeframe (e.g., surgery, death in the family). A student who receives an incomplete must successfully complete remaining requirements by the end of the semester following the termination of the subject in order to receive a final grade, as applicable.
- **New or Recently Admitted Students:** Students who enroll in a subject after it has started may have missed assignments or assessments needed to generate a complete course grade for a given marking period. These students may be given a grade of 'NL' in STARS to indicate this circumstance. Students who receive a grade of 'NL' must successfully complete remaining subject requirements by the end of the semester following the termination of the subject in order to receive a final grade, as applicable.
- **No Show:** A grade of 'NS' is given to a student who has not attended a subject for enough days to determine a grade.

See the section of this guide on [attendance policies](#), the [Course marks table](#) in the appendix, and the [Grading Policy: Frequently Asked Questions and Checklist](#) for more information.

C. REPORT CARDS —Updated September 2016

A school's term model indicates how frequently students receive final grades and change schedules. Schools maintaining a consistent schedule throughout the entire school year have an annualized term model. While the majority of elementary schools use an annualized schedule, schools may award final grades at other frequencies throughout the year, as documented in their grading policies.

Schools must give at least two grades (or marks) in each course or subject per term; see the [course marks table](#) in the appendix for a list of available scales. The last marking period in the 'term' (e.g., year, semester, trimester, or quarter, depending on the school's model) is where final course grades for that term are recorded. Schools should have clearly defined procedures to ensure that students' final course grades are entered in STARS in a timely manner, no later than four weeks after the end of the marking period.

Schools may use the standard NYCDOE report cards generated in STARS and/or school-developed materials to provide students and families with more information about their progress and performance. In elementary school grades, schools currently have the following options to produce and distribute report cards:

- **STARS Classroom** (recommended): Schools can enter report card grades and print report cards directly through STARS Classroom. STARS Classroom contains Common Core aligned indicators for each subject area and a library of narrative comments. Teachers can enter additional narrative where desired. STARS Classroom enables schools to indicate which subjects from students' programs should appear on the STARS report card. Parents can view marks entered into STARS in their [NYC Schools Account \(NYCSA\)](#); school staff members can view these marks via [Student Profile](#). Marks in STARS are also pre-populated in SEMS to inform admissions decisions. Sample versions of STARS report cards are viewable on the [intranet](#).
- **Handwritten report cards**: Schools can print their own versions of the NYCDOE's handwritten report cards from the [intranet](#) and complete these by hand. Schools choosing this option are still required to enter report card grades into STARS Classroom. The grades entered into STARS Classroom should correspond to the grades that appear on the school-based report cards.
- **School-based report cards**: Schools may develop their own materials to provide students and families with more information about their progress and performance, such as school-designed report cards or portfolios. Schools choosing this option are still required to enter report card grades into STARS Classroom. The grades entered into STARS Classroom should correspond to the grades that appear on the school-based report cards.
 - Example: A school distributes their own report cards to families four times per year. These report cards contain detailed narratives about student mastery of Common Core standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, arts, and physical education. The school chooses to use the mastery-based grading scale provided in STARS Classroom and enters grades for these subjects four times per year.
 - Example: A school shares student portfolios with families three times per year. These portfolios contain a summary sheet indicating performance levels (1–4) in the areas of ELA, math, science, and social studies. The school enters these performance levels into STARS Classroom three times per year for ELA, math, science, and social studies.

Schools may also print, complete, and distribute optional supplements to share more detail about student performance with families.

All schools are required to enter report card grades into STARS for grade levels K–12, regardless of the type of report card they choose to use. Schools should enter grades in accordance with their school-level grading policies. Schools are not required to enter indicator marks or narratives if the school is not already using the STARS report card.

V. ATTENDANCE, DISCHARGE, AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

A. SCHOOL CALENDAR

Each year, the school year calendar is centrally designed to meet the NYSED requirement of a minimum number of 180 State aidable days in all schools.¹⁸ The school year calendar, including Chancellor's conference days for professional development and two parent teacher half-days, is pre-determined to ensure that schools do not fall below the minimum number of aidable days. According to NYSED:

- Aidable days must be between September and June.
- Classes or activities scheduled on Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays do not count towards the 180 aidable days.

To avoid the risk of a reduction in State Aid, and to limit the impact on bus scheduling and other services, schools may not open late, dismiss early, or treat any day as a non-attendance day (i.e., "release" any class or grade level) without prior approval through a calendar change request.¹⁹

B. DAILY SESSION TIME AND STUDENT SCHEDULES

[Part 175.5](#) defines the minimum length of the school day for all students:

¹⁸ See NYSED's [attendance memo](#).

¹⁹ Calendar changes can be submitted via the [intranet](#) after a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) vote and SBO vote have been conducted.

- Students in kindergarten must receive two and a half hours of instruction per day for half-day kindergarten and 5 hours of instruction per day for full-day kindergarten.
- Students in grades 1–6 must receive at least five hours of instruction per day.
- Students in grades 7–12 must receive five and a half hours of instruction per day.

The required instructional time includes all time spent by students in instructional or supervised study activities, during regular school hours, exclusive of lunch. Shortening the length of the school day below the thresholds above requires a calendar change request.

Many schools choose to extend their school day beyond the required hours with the help of community-based organizations/non-profits and special grant opportunities. Creative scheduling can greatly enhance learning and school culture for students and families. More information on expanded learning time or extended day planning can be found on [Principals' Portal](#), by visiting [The Department of Youth and Community Development's page](#), and [via NYSED](#).

C. ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Attendance refers to attendance data collection, reporting of how many students are in school each day, and the practices necessary to increase the number of students in school each day.

Implementing procedures for monitoring student attendance and intervening on patterns of absences is important for ensuring that students receive sufficient time for instruction and academic support. Understanding a student's attendance pattern can help educators better support student academic success.

Per Chancellor's Regulation [A-210](#), principals are responsible for the planning, implementation, and supervision of the school attendance program, which describes both the school's record-keeping practices (the procedures schools use to take and record attendance) and efforts to monitor and intervene on patterns of absences and encourage good attendance, including:

- Assigning an attendance coordinator (a pedagogue or administrator) to oversee attendance services;²⁰
- Submitting an annual attendance plan that delineates the school's attendance program on or before October 31st (as part of the [consolidated plan](#));
- Having an attendance committee comprised of, but not limited to, teachers, administrators, members of the pupil personnel team, members of the academic teams, and parents and students, to review and approve the attendance plan; and
- Ensuring the timely and effective attendance taking and recording in ATS including the tracking, follow-up, and support for all absent students, including contacting parents to determine the cause of a student's unexplained absence or lateness and tracking all outreach and intervention efforts in the ILOG system on ATS.

All family trips that result in missed instructional time, including family vacations, count as absences on the student's record in ATS. Students may be discharged only in the case of a permanent move and only in accordance with all other requirements in the [Transfer, Discharge, and Graduation Code Guidelines](#).

Per [NYSED's attendance memo](#), schools must take attendance on all days assessments are administered; these days count toward the required 180 days of instruction.

- For students with disabilities who participate in the [New York State Alternate Assessment \(NYSAA\)](#) and therefore do not take the standard assessments, instruction must be provided during the days that other children are being assessed. Instruction must be provided regardless of which special education services the student receives or the setting in which the student's special education program is provided. Instruction may be provided by such individuals as a general education teacher or special education teacher.

Students who missed 20 or more days the previous year are identified using the '[chronic absentee indicator](#)' ('CHRONIC ABS') in ATS and can then be [matched to specific interventions](#) ('INTV') to help prevent further patterns of absence. Keep in mind that a student with 90% attendance every year from kindergarten through grade 8 enters high school effectively having missed nearly a year of school. Schools can also track if these students' attendance rates [are improving](#). Schools should develop plans for targeting these students and improving their attendance rates.

²⁰ This person coordinates the schools' attendance plan in addition to completing day-to-day attendance administrative tasks.

If school staff members believe that a student may be the subject of educational neglect, or if any other suspicion of abuse or neglect exists, school staff must report the allegations to the State Central Register (SCR). Educational neglect reports made to the SCR should also be documented on the [U407](#) function in ATS. Excessive absences are potential indicators of abuse or neglect and schools must ensure that all excessive absences are investigated in a timely manner. Schools must file a report of educational neglect with the SCR when the following conditions exist:

- Reasonable cause to suspect that the parents are aware or should have been aware of the illegal absences;
- Reasonable cause to suspect that the parents have contributed to the problem or are failing to take steps to address the problem effectively (i.e. they have failed to provide a minimum degree of care); and
- Reasonable cause to suspect educational impairment/harm to the child or imminent danger of impairment/harm (proof of actual educational harm is not necessary as long as harm can be reasonably presumed).

A filing of suspected educational neglect comes after a school has exhausted timely outreach efforts and support services (phone calls, letters, home visits, parent conferences, student conferences, counseling services, referrals, preventive services) and has ascertained that the absences meet the required conditions. There is no set number of unexcused absences which requires a school to file a report of suspected educational neglect. Neither should schools wait until the end of the school year to report education neglect; schools should report when there is reasonable cause to suspect educational neglect and ASC case workers can work with the school to conduct the investigation. The [joint policy statement](#) and the [NYCDOE website](#) provide additional clarification.

See [Attendance, Chronic Absenteeism, and Teaching & Learning](#), and the Principals' Portal section on [attendance](#) for more tips and guides and a complete index of attendance topics. Schools should contact their [attendance lead](#).

D. DISCHARGING STUDENTS

The NYCDOE's [Transfer, Discharge, and Graduation Code Guidelines](#) describe the procedures required to discharge students. The guidelines are updated each year to reflect current standards and to increase alignment with the NYSED reporting requirements. School staff members must be properly trained to administer the transfer, discharge, and graduation processes for students. They must collect and store the appropriate documents to support the discharge. Schools may find it helpful to review changes in the guidelines that went into effect for the current school year and common errors.

Schools must create a system for collecting, recording, and storing documents related to discharges. Teachers must be encouraged to provide any information that they have received from the child or family about moves, new phone numbers, or addresses. In addition, a process must be established for collecting information about new residence addresses and evidence of a student's enrollment in a new school. A standard discharge form with quick references to documentation needed for each discharge is available on the [Principals' Portal attendance page](#).

E. STUDENT RECORDS TRANSFER

Maintaining up-to-date, accurate student records is an important part of ensuring that students are programmed for the correct courses and exams, and receive the services they need. Elementary schools are responsible for obtaining and maintaining relevant records electronically and in students' cumulative files. See the guidance provided in [Records Retention and Disposition Schedule ED-1](#), Chancellor's Regulation [A-820](#), and the [records requests and maintenance guidance document](#).

For elementary grades, NYCDOE's data systems automatically transfer the following information to the next NYCDOE school:

- ATS: biographical information, attendance data, health/immunization records, promotion data, disciplinary history, exam scores, and transportation eligibility;
- STARS Classroom: students' previous final grades; and
- SESIS (Special Education Student Information System): IEP²¹

²¹ It is not necessary to transfer a paper copy of the IEP.

Students' cumulative files should be transferred as follows:

- For students transitioning from NYCDOE elementary schools to NYCDOE middle schools: schools are responsible for transferring students' cumulative files to students' receiving schools each spring once school placement decisions have been finalized. Elementary schools use the [PLNT](#) (general education) and [PSPE](#) (special education) reports in ATS to access students' middle school DBNs, and distribute students' cumulative files accordingly. The PLNT and PSPE reports should be included with the records as a cover sheet. Middle schools can use the [RQSA](#) screen in ATS to request missing records as needed.
- For students enrolling from non-NYCDOE schools: elementary schools are responsible for confirming students' prior schools and contacting the schools to request copies of students' cumulative files in a timely manner in order to provide students with appropriate academic programs.
- For NYCDOE students transferring to non-NYCDOE schools: only copies of the contents of the cumulative folder should be sent to the admitting school. The original folder should be kept at the school indefinitely.

A student's permanent pupil record must be changed to reflect a change in legal name or gender upon receipt of documentation that such legal name and/or gender have been changed pursuant to applicable law; for guidance on name changes without legal documentation, and for information on other records procedures affecting these students, see the public NYCDOE [Transgender Student Guidelines](#).

APPENDICES

A. PROGRAMMING WORKSHEET AND CHECKLIST

Schools may use this worksheet and the checklist on the following page to complete the planning necessary for programming in STARS Classroom.

1. Worksheet: This assumes that most students are receiving the same instructional content in subjects across grade levels. Schools should enter the best estimates for the amount of instructional time students receive *on average each week*, understanding that this may vary. As a frame of reference for the totals in each column, keep in mind the typical 1,500 minutes (25 hours) per week of instructional time in a week.

Subjects	Average minutes/wk of instruction per grade					
<i>Subjects required to program in STARS Classroom</i>	K	1	2	3	4	5
English language arts (ELA)						
Mathematics						
Science						
Social studies and history						
Visual art						
Dance						
Music						
Theatre						
Physical education						
Health						
<i>Other subjects schools may wish to program across all official classes in STARS Classroom</i>						
Reading						
Writing						
Listening, speaking, and language						
Library						
Foreign or Home language arts (HLA) instruction						
Academic and personal behaviors						
Technology						
Family and consumer science						
Career development and occupational studies						
Totals						

2. Checklist: Use this to help you gather the necessary information for other aspects of the programming system.

- Are any official classes set up in such a way that they are receiving different amounts of instructional time in these grades? Are there any official classes that do not need to be programmed?

- Which students might need individual programming?

- Which students are receiving AIS or RtI?

- Which students are receiving Push-in/Pull-out instruction?

- Are any students participating in adaptive physical education (APE)?

- What kinds of program models does your school offer for ELLs? For which courses will you need to indicate ESL instruction is being provided and add a second language of instruction?

- For subject properties:
 - Is your arts instruction provided by an outside cultural organization?

 - Are there any iLearn or other blended/online courses?

 - How many days per week is PE being delivered?

 - How many HIV/AIDS lessons are students receiving per year?

 - Are any particular classes/subjects associated with gifted and talented programs?

- Does your school plan to administer Running Records Assessments (Fountas & Pinnell or DRA2) for an official class?

B. COURSE MARKS TABLE

The table below outlines available grade scales along with their pass/fail equivalents and default numeric equivalents.

Course Mark ²²	Description	Default Numeric Equivalent	Pass/Fail Equivalent
1 (+/-)	Performance level: well below standards	N/A	F
2 (+/-)	Performance level: below standards	N/A	F
3 (+/-)	Performance level: proficient	N/A	P
4 (+/-)	Performance level: excels in standards	N/A	P
10–64	Numeric course grades (1–100 scale)	10–64	F
65–100	Numeric course grades (1–100 scale)	65–100	P
P	Pass	N/A	P
F	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	55	F
D-	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	60	F
D	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	65	P
D+	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	68	P
C-	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	73	P
C	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	75	P
C+	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	78	P
B-	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	83	P
B	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	85	P
B+	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	88	P
A-	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	93	P
A	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	95	P
A+	Alpha course grades (A–F scale)	98	P
E-	Excellent -	93	P
E	Excellent	95	P
E+	Excellent+	98	P
G-	Good-	83	P
G	Good	85	P
G+	Good+	88	P
S-	Satisfactory -	73	P
S	Satisfactory	75	P
S+	Satisfactory+	78	P
N-	Needs Improvement-	60	F
N	Needs Improvement	65	P
N+	Needs Improvement+	68	P
U	Unsatisfactory	55	F
ME	Mastery – Exceeds standards	95	P
MA	Mastery – Above standards	85	P
MT	Mastery – Meets standards	75	P
MP	Mastery – Approaching standards	65	P
MB	Mastery – Below standards	55	F
CR	Credit	N/A	P
NC	No Credit	N/A	F
NS	No credit – No show (grading policies apply)	45	F
NX	No credit – Incomplete (grading policies apply)	N/A	NULL
NL	New/Recent Admit (grading policies apply)	N/A	NULL

²² A scale of IB1–IB7 is also available for International Baccalaureate schools. See the [Middle School](#) or [High School](#) Academic Policy Guides for details.

C. CALENDAR CHANGE REQUESTS

Each year, the school year calendar is designed centrally to meet the NYSED requirement of a minimum number of 180 State aidable days in all schools (see [School Calendar](#)). To avoid the risk of a reduction in State Aid, and to limit the impact on bus scheduling and other services, schools may not open late, dismiss early, or close without prior approval through a calendar change request. Schools must obtain staff and PTA approval through SBO and PTA votes, respectively, prior to submitting a request.²³ Schools submit requests at least six weeks prior to the first requested date change and must provide a minimum of four weeks' notice of the calendar change to parents, once approval has been granted.²⁴

The Student Attendance Calendar published each year provides instructions for schools on reporting student attendance consistent with the central school year calendar. It sets the designated parent-teacher conference days, details instructions for coding shortened days already scheduled in the calendar, and describes the process for coding Regents exam days. Schools should consult the Student Attendance Calendar if they are considering a calendar change request.

Schools may only make calendar change request in the circumstances outlined below, and must be approved annually; schools that have approval to implement any of the alternative schedules below from prior years must resubmit a calendar change request each school year.

- Professional development (e.g. any day(s) when school is in session for fewer than the [required number of hours](#), exclusive of lunch and extended time, to enable additional professional development on that day):
 - Schools may request up to three shortened sessions per semester for staff development (e.g. days that fall below NYSED minimum for a school day), provided all of the following conditions are met:
 - The weekly minimum instructional time requirement, exclusive of lunch and extended time, must still be fulfilled;
 - The school must have SBO approval; and
 - When a shortened session is scheduled during a four day week (for instance, when the week includes a holiday), grades 7–12 must still be in session for 22 hours of instruction over that week, exclusive of lunch and of the extra session of 37.5 minutes for targeted students.
 - Requests that exceed three shortened sessions per semester (e.g. weekly, biweekly or monthly shortened sessions) must adhere to the components outlined above for shortened sessions, and must be submitted in the spring for implementation in the next school year. These requests must also be submitted by the NYCDOE central office to NYSED for approval.
 - Full professional development days (e.g. switching an instructional day with a professional development day): Requests for non-instructional days are reviewed based on the number of available aidable days, which vary each school year. In order to minimize the potential impact to State aid that would result from schools falling below the minimum number of instructional days, principals are encouraged to utilize early dismissals.
- Changing afternoon parent teacher conference dates: a calendar change request is required to reschedule the citywide afternoon conference date.
 - Single-session schools may not re-schedule afternoon conference dates.
 - Multi-session schools with more than one grade level should select one of the set citywide dates.
 - Central approval is not required for the following: with SBO approval, schools may change evening conference dates, schedule afternoon and evening conferences on the citywide afternoon date, and (for multi-level schools, e.g. K–8, 6–12) select one of the citywide afternoon conference dates.

²³ An SBO is the process whereby a principal and his/her UFT chapter leaders agree to propose to the UFT presented school staff deviations from certain requirements of the UFT teachers' contract. First, the principal and UFT chapter leader must reach agreement on the SBO proposal. Next, the UFT chapter leader must arrange for a vote and notify all UFT staff members. The proposal must be approved by 55% of the staff who vote, and the SBO must specify which provision of the contract will be altered.

²⁴ In an emergency situation (e.g. severe flooding, power outage), if a principal believes there is a need to make a change to the regularly scheduled school day and had not previously requested a calendar change, she/he must make this request of the superintendent, who will get authorization from the Chancellor or her designee.