



Frequently Asked Questions: Changes to the New York State Tests

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Elementary, Middle, and High School

1) How are the state tests changing in 2012-13?

Note: This language can also be found in the [Citywide Instructional Expectations](#).

Grades 3 to 8: In 2012-13, the content of the ELA and math tests will change to align to the Common Core, but the structure will remain similar to prior years (administration time, paper/pencil format).

In ELA:

- Tests will focus on:
 - Comparing two or more texts, including listening passages, writing passages, and graphics;
 - Reading and analyzing informational passages without narrative structure, dialogue, or characters, and discussing arguments, evidence, and claims;
 - Requiring students to engage with a 50/50 split of literary and informational texts; and
 - Responding to prompts that are more text-dependent: 35% of prompts will require students to convey an opinion/argue, 35% to explain, and 30% to convey experience.

In math:

- In keeping with the Common Core's emphasis on depth over breadth, tests will emphasize the major work of the grade. The major work of the grade is a set of key concepts that helps teachers prioritize where to spend most of their instructional time. Concepts may be assessed at different grade levels from when they have been assessed in the past. For example, the new grade five tests will include more items assessing fractions and no items assessing probability and statistics;
- Assessments will include more questions that require students to take multiple steps in order to solve them;
- Questions that in the past have focused on testing mathematical vocabulary will instead require students to apply skills based on their understanding of that vocabulary;
- Questions using tools like rulers or protractors will include prompts that require students to both choose the appropriate tool and apply mathematical concepts in using the tool.

High schools: In 2012-13, the Regents exams will not be modified to align to the Common Core. In 2013-14, the English, Algebra 1/Integrated Algebra, and Geometry Regents exams will align to the Common Core. During the transition, high schools are encouraged to focus on increasing the rigor of their courses. Beginning in fall 2012, the Progress Report will include a new College Readiness section measuring how many students pass college preparatory courses and exams, meet college readiness standards, and enroll in college or a postsecondary program after graduation.

2) What kind of test preparation activities can I do to make sure my students are prepared for the 2012-13 state tests?

Our collective goal is to prepare students to think and read critically, communicate well, and solve complex problems. As state assessments are aligned to the Common Core standards, they will more effectively evaluate these skills. However, no single test can capture the full range of knowledge and skills our students are learning in the classroom each day. Schools with the strongest instruction

infuse test readiness into their lessons in ways that do not disrupt the curriculum. Students who engage in cognitively demanding tasks and assignments perform better on tests than students who practice sample test questions without context in the curriculum.

Many teachers teach time management and other test taking strategies by providing students an opportunity to practice in test taking conditions for a limited time in the weeks leading up to the tests. This should not be the primary activity that students engage in to prepare for assessments and should not replace the curriculum.

3) How does the change in 2012-13 state tests impact students with disabilities and English Language Learners? Will there be changes to NYSAA and the NYSESLAT?

Students with disabilities and English Language Learners who are currently required to take state tests based on their IEPs and ELL status will continue to be required to take state tests.

The NYSESLAT will align to the Common Core Learning Standards beginning in the 2012-13 school year. The NYSAA will align to the Common Core in 2013-14 and New York State is considering adopting new alternate assessments as a part of the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) beginning in 2014-15.

Network teams will support schools with planning instruction for multiple access points and ways of demonstrating understanding so that all students engage in rigorous learning experiences. These are two components of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Network teams will also support schools in utilizing a Response to Intervention (RTI) protocol at their schools to ensure that students who need additional support are being properly identified.

4) Do these changes have any impact on how I use ARIS or other assessment data tools like the Reading Tracker?

NYCDOE offers a wide array of tools and resources to help schools capture data to inform their instructional decision making. Educators can continue to use assessment data tools like ARIS, the Reading Tracker, and the tools in the Periodic Assessment portfolio alongside other local data points to monitor student progress, look for trends, and help schools and teachers modify curriculum and instruction. When discussing the data (particularly historical data) from these systems with families, schools should make sure they are clear about the changing expectations and standards.

5) When will state tests be administered in the 2012-13 school year?

In 2012-13, the New York State assessment schedule is expected to remain consistent with prior years' schedules. 3-8 ELA and math tests will be administered in late April, and Regents exams will be administered in January, June, and August. The [3-8](#) and [Regents](#) schedules are available online.

6) How will changes to the 2012-13 state tests impact accountability?

The revised ELA and math exams for grades 3 through 8 and the revised Regents exams will continue to be factored into the Progress Reports and New York State accountability. Because the Progress Report methodology is based on comparisons among students and schools, we do not expect the changes to have a systemic impact on schools' accountability results.

Following the US Education Department's approval of New York State's No Child Left Behind waiver, New York will be shifting to a new accountability model in the 2012-13 school year. Under the new model, schools will be designated as "priority" or "focus" schools for a period of three years based on their 2010-11 school year results. While Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) will still be calculated based on the revised ELA and math exams, AYP will not impact schools' accountability status or trigger particular interventions.

7) What is PARCC and what are PARCC assessments?

PARCC, which stands for [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers](#) is a consortium of states working together to develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English and math anchored in what it takes to be ready for college and careers. These new K-12 assessments will build a pathway to college and career readiness by the end of high school, mark students' progress toward this goal from 3rd grade up, and provide teachers with timely information to inform instruction and provide student support. The PARCC assessments will be ready for states to administer during the 2014-15 school year and New York State plans to adopt PARCC assessments once they are made available.

8) What will the PARCC Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) and End-of-Year Assessment (EOY) look like?

The ELA/literacy PBA will focus on writing effectively when analyzing text. It will focus on research as well as literary analysis and citing evidence from text. The mathematics PBA will focus on applying skills, concepts, and understandings to solve multi-step problems requiring abstract reasoning, precision, perseverance, and strategic use of tools. The ELA/literacy EOY assessment will focus on reading comprehension by asking students to read and respond to question on a variety of texts, emphasizing cross-disciplinary content and informational texts and academic vocabulary. The math EOY assessment will be comprised of innovative, machine-scorable items. For more info on the PARCC 3-8 assessments please click [here](#).

9) When will students be expected to take tests online?

In 2012-13 and 2013-14, students will not be expected to take state tests online. In 2014-15, New York State is planning to adopt PARCC assessments. These assessments are intended to be taken online. However, many schools will require significant upgrades to infrastructure and hardware before online testing can occur. To ensure fair testing conditions for all students, no school will be required to administer tests online before its infrastructure and hardware is upgraded appropriately.

To prepare our classrooms for online testing, New York City will be participating in a statewide process to evaluate technology needs, understand school capacity, and implement technology upgrades. To develop our students' technological literacy, schools should provide opportunities for students to practice using technology for instructional and assessment activities. To meet these goals in a low stakes way, schools may consider trying online administration of the CCLS-aligned Performance Tasks available in Acuity. Educators interested in seeking out more information about online testing can visit www.parcconline.org.

Elementary and Middle School

10) Will the number of state tests that my students are expected to take change in 2012-13? Will the length of the administration window change?

No.

11) Will the scoring of 3-8 tests change? How?

No, the scoring of 3-8 tests will not change in 2012-13. New York City will continue to be responsible for scoring our students' exams. For grades 3-8 ELA and Math, multiple choice responses will continue to be scanned at the Scan Center and constructed responses will continue to be scored at regional scoring sites.

12) Will the grades 4 and 8 science tests change?

Through a collaborative, state-led process, new K–12 science standards are being developed that will be rich in content and practice, arranged in a coherent manner across disciplines and grades to provide all students an internationally benchmarked science education. The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) will be based on the *Framework for K–12 Science Education* developed by the National Research Council. A draft of the standards will be available in the fall of 2012.

New York State has not announced any changes to the grade 4 and 8 science tests for the 2012-13 school year, but in the future may decide to adopt the Next Generation Science Standards and change the assessments accordingly. Educators can visit [EngageNY](http://EngageNY.org) and the [Common Core Implementation Timeline](http://CommonCoreImplementationTimeline.org) (CCIT) in particular for continued updates and information about changes all state exams and the [Next Generation Science](http://NextGenerationScience.org) Standards site for more information about the new standards.

13) How is the New York City Department of Education helping schools to prepare for the transition to the Common Core and the changes to the state tests?

The Citywide Instructional Expectations as well as all of the resources and supports available to schools on the [Common Core Library](http://CommonCoreLibrary.org) and through the [Periodic Assessment program](http://PeriodicAssessmentProgram.org) are designed to support the kind of instruction that the Common Core aligned state exams will demand.

New York City is providing resources to support schools through the transition to the Common Core:

- Through the Periodic Assessment program via the Acuity platform, educators will have access to 3-8 assessments aligned to the Common Core:
 - *Grades 3-8 math baseline assessments* are beginning-of-year diagnostic assessments that determine the degree to which students are proficient in the major work of the previous grade, as it relates to the major work of the current grade. The assessment includes multiple choice items only.
 - *Grade 3-8 Math and ELA benchmark assessments* are assessments designed to periodically measure student progress on a set of learning objectives aligned to the CCLS. They include various item types: multiple choice, constructed response, and performance tasks. Because so many Common Core standards require critical thinking and problem-solving skills that cannot be fully assessed through multiple choice questions, these assessments will include fewer multiple choice questions and will not be available in a multiple choice-only version.
 - *CCLS-aligned tasks* are currently available in the Acuity task bank and additional tasks will be added through the summer and fall. The task bank includes those on the Common Core Library as well as other DOE-provided tasks that vary in length and cover a variety of skills. Tasks include rubrics and student exemplars.
- *Tasks and instructional supports* available on the [Common Core Library](#) for ELA and math grades pre-K-12 will be expanded to include science and social studies as well as more options for existing grades and subjects.
- *Math Overviews* include high-level scope and sequences in grades K-8 aligned to the Common Core and guidance around how to leverage Core Curriculum materials (i.e., Everyday Mathematics and Impact Math) to teach the Common Core Learning Standards. These resources are posted on the [Common Core Library](#).
- *“What’s Different?” in Literacy* documents on the [Common Core Library](#) outline the differences between the Common Core standards across grade levels, indicating the key advances in student expectations in literacy from grade to grade. They also outline the shifts between the NYS Standards and the Common Core in a specific grade to show the major differences in the new standards.

14) What can teachers do to identify how well students have learned the pre-requisite skills they'll need to succeed in their current grade, according to the Common Core?

Teacher teams can build on the tradition of collaborative inquiry and the 2011-12 Citywide Instructional Expectations in order to identify the pre-requisite skills for each grade according to the Common Core. Teachers can do this by getting to know the Common Core standards for their grade and the previous grade(s) well, examining student work in light of the Common Core and surfacing gaps to inform instruction.

In math, teachers will have access to baseline assessments in math grades 3-8 through the [Periodic Assessment program](#) to diagnose student understanding at the start of the year. The Math Overviews on the [Common Core Library](#) indicate the amount of time that should be spent on concepts across the year in grades K-8 in math and include high-level unit maps that outline the standards taught in each unit and identify how to leverage common text books (i.e. Everyday Math or Impact Math).

In literacy, teachers may engage student in close, analytical reading of short-yet-complex texts accompanied with text-dependent questions in order to get them used to the kind of thinking that the Common Core Learning Standards demand. Teachers can reference the “What’s Different?” for literacy document on the Common Core Library to begin to understand and internalize the Common Core standards in literacy/ELA.

15) How can teachers ensure their scope and sequence covers the Common Core Standards assessed on the 2012-13 NYS exams?

The spring 2013 ELA and math tests for grades 3-8 will be aligned to the Common Core Standards. In math, grade 3-8 assessments will cover the Common Core Standards that represent the [major work of the grade](#). Based on information from New York State, elementary and middle school scope and sequences will need to align to the Common Core beginning in September 2012. This spring and summer, elementary and middle schools are expected to review their scope and sequences and:

- In math, reorganize the sequence of math content across the year to teach fewer topics and allow for more time to focus on the major work⁵ of the grade;
- In literacy across content areas, infuse opportunities to read and respond to a combination of literary and informational texts.

Additionally, as they work towards meeting the Citywide Instructional Expectations, teachers may revise existing units of study or adopt/adapt units from the Common Core Library or other external sources. New York State has plans to release Math and ELA Common Core aligned curricula that will be optional for schools to use as a resource in the 2012-13 school year.

16) How do the changes that New York State is making to exams in 2012-13 compare to exams that students will see in the future, including PARCC exams?

The changes that New York State is making to state tests for the 2012-13 school year will align the assessments with the Common Core standards while maintaining consistency with the existing format and structure of the tests. The PARCC assessments will align to the Common Core Learning Standards in both content *and* format in that they will include more performance-based tasks and innovative item types. By fully aligning the content of the 2012-13 and 2013-14 state tests with the Common Core standards within the constraints of the existing test format, the state is signaling a shift in what educators should begin to expect of students and how instruction in classrooms may need to change in preparation for PARCC assessments. A [detailed timeline view](#) of changes to the state tests between now and the 2014-15 school year is available online at engageny.org/resource/common-core-implementation-timeline.

Some major differences that we should expect to see on the PARCC assessments of 2014-2015, which will not be present on the 2012-13 state tests are:

- PARCC assessments are expected to be administered online for schools with appropriate infrastructure updates, and therefore may include items and tasks that are more engaging and interactive than typical paper-and-pencil tests.
- The PARCC summative assessments will be comprised of two parts: a Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) administered as close to the end of the school year as possible, and an

End-of-Year Assessment (EOY) administered after approximately 90% of the school year is complete.

17) How will changes to the state tests impact promotion policy?

Students in grades 3-8 need to score a proficiency level 2 on the ELA and Math tests to be promoted. (In grade 8, students also need to pass core courses.) The changes to the state tests do not impact this policy.

Students who do not score a level 2 have the opportunity to attend summer school and take the NYC summer assessments in August to be promoted. Students who do not pass this test may be promoted in August if their standardized promotion portfolio demonstrates the equivalent of level 2 performance. [Note: promotion policies differ for some students (e.g. some students with disabilities and English Language Learners); for more information, please see [Chancellor's Regulation A-501](#).]

Regents Exams

18) When are the Regents exams changing and how?

English Language Arts, Integrated Algebra, and Geometry Regents Exams will be fully aligned to the Common Core in the 2013-2014 school year. Similar to the approach that the state is taking with 3-8 exams, the content will be modified to align to the Common Core but the structure and administration will be similar to that of the current Regents exams.

In 2014-15, New York is planning to adopt PARCC exams for ELA and Math in high school. To promote the changes to curriculum required by the Common Core in Mathematics, New York State has committed to the [Traditional Pathway](#) described in the Common Core Standards Math Appendix A. In their commitment to prepare students for the PARCC in 2014-15, New York State will consider adopting any enhancements to the Traditional Pathways document that PARCC decides to make.

New York State previously released information about potentially administering English assessments in grades 9 and 10 grade in addition to the English Regents. This will not occur in the 2012-13 school year. Educators can visit [EngageNY](#) and the [Common Core Implementation Timeline](#) (CCIT) in particular for continued updates and information about changes to High School exams.

The Common Core Learning standards do emphasize literacy across the content areas including History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects and at some point in the future New York State may opt to incorporate those literacy standards into their Regents exams. The State plans to release more information throughout this school year about when Science and Social Studies Regents exams may change.

19) Will there be a January Regents administration in the 2012-2013 school year?

Yes. The schedule for the January Regents exams is available online at www.p12.nysed.gov/apda/schedules/hs/res-113.pdf.

20) Will scoring for Regents exams change? How?

In accordance with a new state requirement and the recommendations outlined in the February 2012 [High School Academic Data Audit Report](#), the NYCDOE is phasing in a distributed scoring approach to ensure that no teacher scores the exams of students that attend the school at which he/she teaches. This requirement will be in full effect, for all administering schools and for all Regents exams in SY 2012 – 2013. Regents exam scoring is transitioning from the current system, in which schools score their own exams, to a new system, in which no school scores its own exams. Over 150 schools are participating in regional, campus, or electronic sites according to the new system in June 2012, and all schools will participate beginning in January 2013.

21) How will changes to the Regents exams impact diploma requirements?

Changes to align the Regents exams to the Common Core are not expected to impact diploma requirements. Students will still need to pass required Regents exams or State-approved alternatives to earn a diploma (in addition to earning required course credits). The Board of Regents is considering allowing more flexibility in how students meet Regents diploma exam requirements, including substituting an approved CTE assessment for one of the Regents exams, or replacing one of the Social Studies exams with an additional math or science exam. More information will be shared if the Board of Regents approves any of these changes.

In addition, the Board of Regents has announced changes that impact diploma options for students with disabilities:

- Students entering grade 9 after September 2011 and thereafter will not have the option of using Regents Competency Tests (RCTs) to meet the exam requirement for the Local diploma (utilizing the safety net provision). These students will still be able to earn a Local diploma by earning a score of 55-64 on required Regents exams. In addition, the Board of Regents is considering alternative options for earning a local diploma through the safety net provision; more information will be shared as soon as it becomes available.
- The IEP diploma will no longer be an option beginning July 1, 2013. Beginning in the 2012-13 school year and thereafter, students who participate in NY State Alternate Assessments will be eligible for a new skills and achievement credential. For more information, see <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1006.html>.