

NYSESLAT Parent Information Brochure

The New York State Board of Regents has established learning standards for all English language learners attending New York State schools. In compliance with the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), the Department developed an annual test that measures student progress toward meeting these standards. This test is the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT).

This informational brochure describes NYSESLAT and how it measures the progress of English language learners. From this brochure, parents will also learn what they can do to help their students meet the challenges of NYSESLAT.

Why do we have NYSESLAT?

NCLB mandates that all English language learners from kindergarten through grade 12 be assessed every year to measure their English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and track their annual progress toward proficiency. NYSESLAT helps schools determine which instructional standards they must focus on to ensure their English language learners fully acquire the language proficiency that will prepare them for success in the classroom.

When will the test be administered?

In 2006, the Speaking subtest will be administered April 24–May 19. The Listening, Reading, and Writing subtests will be administered May 8–May 19.

What kinds of responses will students be asked to provide?

Students will be asked to respond to four different types of questions—multiple-choice, short written response, extended written response, and oral response. The chart below shows the different kinds of questions in each subtest.

Subtest	Types of Questions			
	Multiple-Choice	Short Written Response	Extended Written Response	Oral Response
Listening	✓			
Speaking				✓
Reading	✓			
Writing	✓	✓	✓	

How do we know that NYSESLAT measures student achievement at a high standard?

Each test question is rigorously reviewed by several educators. Only those test questions judged to be of acceptable quality are approved for inclusion on the test. The committee of educators also reviews the test questions to ensure that they are fair to students in New York State schools who come from all over the world, as well as from very different environments within the state.

The test questions are also sampled in classrooms with English language learners to ensure that the directions are clear and easy to follow, and the tests are interesting to students and are reliable indicators

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of student achievement. Through this process, the end product—which includes questions, directions, and designs—is proven to be user-friendly and engaging with both students and teachers. Although the tests are challenging for students, the questions, graphics, and stories engage students and reflect the kinds of activities in which they are involved on a daily basis. Parents can be assured that the tests will measure the learning of each individual student and provide meaningful information about his or her English language proficiency.

Who will score the tests?

NYSESLAT is scored by New York State teachers who receive special training in the rating of students' oral and written responses.

How does NYSESLAT measure whether students are progressing toward English language proficiency?

Because test results provide students, teachers, and parents with an objective report of each student's strengths and weaknesses in the English language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, NYSESLAT will help determine whether these students are making adequate progress toward English language proficiency. The test results will also help schools focus on ways to improve instruction so that English language learners become proficient in English, thereby freeing them to focus on content-based materials, such as mathematics and science.

How can parents help their students?

New York State educators urge parents to show their children how important education is to them by visiting classrooms and teachers whenever possible. Educators know how important parental support is to student learning. And research shows that parents do have influence. As reported by Knight-Ridder Newspapers, "Kids whose parents are involved—not just at home, but also at school—tend to have higher test scores, better attendance, tend to stay in school longer, and tend to go on to higher education." The value that the family places on education can make the difference between high and low performance. Therefore, parents are encouraged to engage in regular communication with the schools about their children's progress.

There are several other things parents can do to help students prepare for NYSESLAT. Parents should make sure children get adequate sleep and eat a nutritionally balanced meal prior to taking the test. Parents can also aid students' performance by helping to ease their minds about the tests. Reassurance from parents about the test can positively impact a child's test scores. Parents should read and review with their children any and all information they receive regarding the testing experience. Parents should also urge students to do their best, while reminding them that they are not expected to know the answer to every question. Some questions may seem hard, but students should keep trying and do their best.

Samplers containing examples of the types of questions on the NYSESLAT are provided on the New York State Education Department's web site at <http://emsc33.nysed.gov/osa/nyseslat/samplers.htm>. Parents are encouraged to review the samplers with their children before they take the test.

New York State's schools invite parents to take an active role in their children's education.