

TIPS FOR FAMILIES TO TALK WITH THEIR CHILD ABOUT THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS & CHANGING STATE TESTS

August 2013

Over the past couple of years, New York City schools have been transitioning to the new Common Core Learning Standards, which mean more challenging work for students in class. In spring 2013, for the first time, State reading and math tests for grades 3–8 reflected the new standards. The new tests are part of an effort to better understand whether students are on track to succeed in college and careers as they progress through school. The tests focus on the skills that students will need to succeed at the next level: understanding fiction and non-fiction texts, using evidence in writing to support main ideas, and solving complex math problems.

Because no one knows your child the way you do, it can be especially powerful for you to speak to your child about the results of the new tests and how the standards are impacting how they learn in class. As a parent, you can help by talking with your child about what they remember from the tests. During the school year, consider using open-ended questions about what they learned in school each day, reviewing their homework or asking about upcoming assignments, and attending school events to learn about what their teachers expect. Your child's school will have these conversations as well during the beginning of the school year.

How can I talk to my child about the test results?

The standards and tests have changed. To be able to get a well-paying job and have options after high school, today's students need to be able to think critically and to explain what they know.

That's why your school has been transitioning to the new Common Core standards.

The new tests reflect the changes that you will face as you move from elementary school to middle school to high school and beyond.

Lower test scores do not mean you didn't learn and make progress last year.

Because the new tests are more challenging, students' scores statewide are lower than in the past.

A lower score this year does not mean you didn't learn last year.

The tests are meant to help your teachers support your learning, and your teachers and I believe in you and will support you in helping you learn what you need to know.

The test scores are not the full picture of who you are as a student.

The tests are only one piece of what you know and are able to do, and your results give teachers a guide on how they can help you learn more.

Your teachers also look at your classwork and how much effort you give—there are many ways to show that you are making progress.

As a child who is still learning English, your teachers understand that the new tests may have been especially difficult for you, but they believe in you and will help you succeed.

When you face tests or schoolwork that seems really hard, it is important to keep trying and not give up. It is okay to struggle sometimes, and I believe you can meet the challenge.

By continuing to work hard and persist through difficulties, you will be better prepared to be successful in school and life.

How do I talk to my child about the current school year?

You could begin by saying that as your parent, I am:

Learning more about the Common Core standards so that I can help you with your schoolwork.

Talking to your teachers to learn more about what you are learning and get resources to help you at home and school.

You can share that your child's teachers are:

Planning learning activities that help you practice the skills you need to be successful.

Able to give you extra support to help you when you need it.

You can encourage your child to:

Keep working hard at school and at home.

Ask questions and for help when you need it.

Talk to me and your teachers about anything that is challenging or confusing.

How can I learn more information in order to help my child?

There are many ways to learn more information. First, talk to your child's teacher(s) about the skills that you can help your child practice at home. Second, ask your child about his or her successes and challenges at school, and explain to them that it is really important not to give up when work is challenging. In addition, you can become familiar with the new standards by going to NYC.gov and searching for Common Core Parent Resources or visiting the website EngageNY.org, which has resources to help families learn about the Common Core and support their students at home.