

A Guide to Helping Parents Understand the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) Score Report

Slide 1: This presentation is intended for educators as a guide to helping parents and guardians understand the NYSAA Score Report.

Slide 2: The presentation will address what the NYSAA is and what it looks like, why the student is taking NYSAA, meeting preparation, reports to be shared with parents, the DLM Performance Profile, other topics parents may ask about, and helpful resources for these conversations.

Slide 3: You may need to explain what the NYSAA even is and why their child is taking it prior to explaining the score reports. Explain that the NYSAA is part of the New York State testing program that measures the attainment of the state’s learning standards in the areas of English language arts—both reading and writing—mathematics, and science for students with the most severe cognitive disabilities. Explain that students are assessed each spring in grades 3 through 8 for ELA and mathematics and once at the secondary level. Then students in grades 5, 8, and secondary level are assessed in science. Note that students in the secondary level are tested based on their birthdate at the grade 9 cohort.

Slide 4: This graphic explains the thought process for why a student takes the NYSAA. The Committee on Special Education, or CSE, determines that the student will participate in the NYSAA and/or on a particular state or district-wide assessment of student achievement. The student’s Individualized Education Program, or IEP, must indicate NYSAA participation and provide a statement on why the student cannot participate in the regular assessment and why the NYSAA is appropriate for the student. The student’s IEP must also document any individual testing accommodations to be used consistently by the student in the recommended educational program and in the administration of state assessments. Then, for a student who is recommended by the CSE for participation in NYSAA, each annual goal on the student’s IEP must also include short-term instructional objectives and/or benchmarks, which are measurable intermediate steps between the student’s present levels of performance and the annual goal.

Slide 5: Keep in mind parents and guardians will likely be curious to know what the assessment is like. You can tell them the NYSAA is designed so the test is individualized for each student based on a student’s individual needs and accessibility supports so that the student can show what they know and can do. Explain that the test is delivered online. This computerized assessment allows for greater student accessibility and provides useful

information to help inform instruction. Share that students are usually administered three-to-five questions grouped together in small, short testlets, so the student does not become too tired or stressed. In each subject tested, a student completes seven to nine testlets. The test is adaptive, which means when the student completes a testlet, the system will present the next testlet at a higher, lower, or the same complexity level as the previous one based on the items the student correctly answered. Finally, explain that each Essential Element, or alternate achievement standard, is tested once at one complexity level.

Slide 6: Essential Elements are a key term in understanding the DLM assessment. Explain to parents and guardians that Essential Elements are alternate achievement standards that are reduced in depth, breadth, and complexity from the learning standards. Each Essential Element in ELA and mathematics has five levels of complexity. Each complexity level is made up of skills, knowledge, and understandings that either lead up to the Essential Element, match the Essential Element, or exceed the Essential Element. Science has three levels of complexity. For each Essential Element tested, a student is tested at the complexity level that best matches the skills, knowledge, and understandings the student will be able demonstrate in regard to what they know and can do. A student's overall performance in a subject is based on the number of skills the student mastered in relation to the total skills available in the assessment. Evidence of skill mastery is based on testlets taken.

Slide 7: Describe how the student accessed the assessment, whether it was using a computer or other device. Explain the types of testlets the student took, whether teacher-administered or computer-delivered. Discuss the accessibility supports provided. Explain that the DLM system provides accessibility in three ways: via built-in technology, such as magnification, supports provided by the teacher, such as the teacher entering the student's chosen responses, and that the system delivers a testlet that best matches the complexity level at which the student can demonstrate what they know and can do.

Slide 8: As you meet with parents and guardians, strive to set a positive tone. Be sure you have reviewed the NYSED Score Report before the meeting to make sure you are comfortable speaking about it. Think about different explanations you could use to describe the score report contents. For example, be prepared to explain perhaps what a Conceptual Area is. If you need to modify the language in the score report, be careful not to change the intended meaning. For example, it would be acceptable to substitute "reading and writing" for "English language arts" or "ELA." However, do not refer to ELA as just "reading," because the ELA assessment includes more than just reading.

Slide 9: New York State Education Department (NYSED) Score Reports, which are different from DLM score reports, are available to the student's public school—that is, the school with Committee on Special Education (CSE) responsibility, through the State's data warehouse, the L2RPT Reporting System. These are available in late September following the administration of the NYSAA the previous spring and are generally mailed home to the parent thereafter. The L2RPT system reflects statewide Level 2 data in the Student

Information Repository System, or SIRS, which are made available through distributed applications at the regional Level 1 Data Centers and are aggregated to the region at which they are hosted.

Slide 10: Shown here is a NYSED score report. Since this report is for parents, the first page starts off with an explanation for parents and guardians then provides links to resources. The second page of the report indicates the student's NYSED performance level for both this year and last year and explains what the level means. Then finally, the report provides a breakdown of skills mastered by area like the bottom of the DLM Performance Profile.

Slide 11: First, shown here is page one of an example DLM Individual Student Score Report, or ISR. ISRs are available in September for students who completed the NYSAA during the previous school year. District Test Coordinators have access to ISRs via the DLM Reports tab in Kite® Educator Portal. Teachers have access to DLM score reports for those students rostered to them in the current school year. While DLM score reports include two parts—a Performance Profile and a Learning Profile—**only** share the Performance Profile with parents and guardians. The Learning Profile portion should be used for instructional planning.

Slide 12: The DLM and NYSED score reports are alike in that a student receives a report for each subject in which the student was assessed. The NYSED score report is similar to the DLM Performance Profile.

Slide 13: However, there are some differences between the two score reports. The DLM score report includes a Performance Profile and a Learning Profile. The Performance Profile summarizes overall performance with the number of skills mastered for groups of related Essential Elements and can be used to develop Individualized Education Programs, or IEPs, by describing present levels of performance and providing guidance on goals to be focused on. It can be used to communicate with parents and guardians to explain student overall performance in a subject. The Areas section of the Performance Profile describes student strengths. The NYSED score report summarizes a student's achievement in relation to the state's alternate achievement standards and is intended to be sent to parents.

Slide 14: Shown here are the two pages of the DLM Performance Profile. Even though this student scored at the At Target performance level, the Areas bar charts offer several things to consider. First, what are the student's strengths? Of the six Areas listed across pages one and two of the Performance Profile, the student's highest percentage was 60%. On the first page, the student achieved 60% for M.C1.1. To clarify that code, M stands for mathematics, C1 stands for Claim 1, and then the number 1 at the end of the code stands for conceptual area 1. Claim 1 for mathematics is "Students demonstrate increasingly complex understanding of number sense." Claim 1 Conceptual Area 1 is "Understand number structures, such as counting, place value, and fractions," which is indicated on the score report. On page 2 of the report, notice the student also achieved 60% for two of the conceptual areas reported on that page. So, these are the student's areas of strength. Point

out these areas to the parent or guardian before talking about the weaker areas. You should note that each Essential Element for ELA and mathematics accounts for five skills because each ELA and mathematics Essential Element has five linkage levels. On score reports, the term linkage levels isn't used. Instead, the term "skills" is used and is actually a more parent-friendly term. However, for example, "three out of five skills" means the student was assessed on one Essential Element and mastered three of its skills. Sometimes it's helpful to explain to the parent that the student only took one testlet for a particular Area. Whereas "one out of ten skills" means the student was assessed on two Essential Elements for the Area but only mastered one of the skills. In the case of this student's Performance Profile, the student's lowest Areas were M.C1.2 and M.C1.3. Talk to the parent or guardian about the kinds of skills included in these Areas and how these can be areas of focus for the current school year.

Slide 15: The NYSED performance levels are similar to, but not exactly the same as, the DLM performance levels. The NYSED performance levels are numbered 1 through 4, with level 4 being the highest. The DLM performance levels are Emerging, Approaching the Target, At Target, and Advanced. Provided here are the descriptions for each level.

Slide 16: Regarding the performance level categories on the DLM Performance Profile, explain that At Target means the student met the New York alternate achievement learning standard. Again, focus on the student's highest level of mastery in the Areas section. The overall DLM performance level corresponds to New York's performance level descriptors. If parents or guardians are concerned about low performance, remind them the DLM assessment has high expectations and that results are a snapshot of the student's skill mastery on the particular day the student was assessed on those skills.

Slide 17: Again, here are the DLM performance levels.

Slide 18: As mentioned earlier, this student's overall performance placed the student at the At Target performance level. The narrative at the top explains that for grade 5 mathematics, there are 40 skills related to eight Essential Elements, and of those 40 skills, the student mastered 15 of them. It is important to explain that students are not assessed at every skill level for every Essential Element and that the assessment is not scored as a percentage, such as 15 out of 40.

Slide 19: The Areas section of the score report summarizes the student's performance within groups of related Essential Elements within the subject. As stated earlier, focus on the number of skills the student mastered first, and remind the parent or guardian that students may demonstrate skills during instruction but not during the assessment, or vice versa.

Slide 20: As explained earlier, a bar chart is used to illustrate the student's mastery by percentage of skills per Area. However, because students are not assessed at every skill level for every Essential Element, you'll need to explain that the percentages are not

expected to be 100%. Instead, just focus on the highest number of skills mastered as the strengths and look to the lower numbers as the areas of focus for the current year.

Slide 21: Here are some additional considerations for discussing the Performance Profile with parents. First, remind them that the skills demonstrated during this assessment provide only one piece of evidence about what the student knows and can do. Again, realize the number of linkage levels mastered is not a raw score or the number of items correct. The Performance Profile explains the student's overall performance on Essential Elements for the grade and subject. Provide examples of the Essential Elements and relate the Essential Elements to what is being taught to grade-level peers. Provide academic examples of the skills. Finally, you may want to show parents and guardians where the Essential Elements are found on New York's page of the DLM website.

Slide 22: You can share released testlets with parents, following the information in the Guide to Practice Activities and Released Testlets linked on New York's page of the DLM website. Anyone can download the Student Portal application and access the released testlets using the demo accounts listed in the guide. Examples of released testlets can also be accessed by clicking the Instructional Resources tab on the DLM website, selecting the Instructional Resources for Year-End Model States, then either the ELA, Mathematics, or Science tab and the Testlets option, then clicking one of the links to the released testlets, which will open as PDFs. However, **never** give specific examples of assessment items other than the released testlets. The assessment items are **secure** even after test administration is complete. Also, do **not** share the student's login credentials for Student Portal because the NYSAA is only to be completed in school and administered by the teacher.

Slide 23: As for the current school year, show parents that many conceptual areas that were learning targets last year are learning targets for this school year. For example, Conceptual Area 1.2, "Construct understandings of text," is assessed every year for ELA. Show parents a few particular Essential Elements and the skills at the applicable linkage level that are planned for instruction.

Slide 24: Finally, refer to the TEST ADMINISTRATION MANUAL and the ACCESSIBILITY MANUAL to remind yourself about topics that parents are likely to ask about. Use the test blueprint documents to compare one year's Essential Elements and skills to the next. Remember that the mini-maps that show the linkage level skills and how they relate to each Essential Element are in the resources titled Currently Tested Essential Elements for each subject. You might even show parents an example of a mini-map and discuss the skills the student has learned, is learning, and will hopefully learn. The Parent Brochure is also available online and is translated into several languages.