



ST. MARTIN SECONDARY SCHOOL

"Teach me Goodness, Discipline and Knowledge"

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO EQAO TESTS

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) tests students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics at key points in their secondary education.

Students are tested twice:

- In Grade 9 to assess mathematics. The Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics provides individual and system data on students' knowledge and skills, based on the expectations for students in Grade 9 applied and academic programs in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: Mathematics*. All students in these programs are required to participate in the assessment.
- In Grade 10 to assess reading and writing. The OSSLT (Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test) is based on the Grade 9 Ontario Curriculum. The purpose of the OSSLT is to ensure that students have acquired the essential reading and writing skills that apply to all subject areas in the provincial curriculum up to the end of Grade 9. All students in public and private schools who are working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) are required to write the OSSLT in Grade 10. Successful completion of the OSSLT or OSSLC is a graduation requirement.

When does the OSSLT occur?

The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test is administered to all students in the province in April of their Grade 10 school year. The testing for the 2010-2011 school year takes place on March 31, 2011. Successful completion of the test is a graduation requirement.

How will the OSSLT be administered?

The test is composed of reading selections with multiple-choice and open-response items, writing prompts with multiple choice writing items. The test is administered in one day in two 75-minute blocks. Accommodations can be provided to students with Individual Education Plans and special provisions are available to students new to English (ELL).

What are the components of the OSSLT?

The OSSLT is administered in two booklets. Each booklet must be completed within a one hour and 15 minute period. There is a short break between each session. Each booklet contains graphic, informational and narrative reading selections. They vary in length from a single paragraph to two pages. The reading skills are evaluated using both multiple choice and open-response questions. Students will be tested on how well they:

- understand explicitly (directly) stated ideas and information;
- understand implicitly (indirectly) stated ideas and information and
- make connections between information and ideas in a reading selection and personal knowledge and experience.

In addition the test has short and long writing tasks, and multiple-choice questions that focus on three writing skills required in school and daily life:

- developing a main idea with sufficient supporting details;
- organizing information and ideas in a coherent manner, and
- using conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation) in a manner that does not distract from clear communication.

The long writing tasks consist of a news report and a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion.

Does my child have to take the OSSLT?

Yes. Ontario's *Education Quality and Accountability Act* states that all students in publicly funded schools must participate in this test.

How is the EQAO's OSSLT different from the tests my child already does in class?

Classroom tests and the EQAO's OSSLT have different goals and provide different kinds of information about student learning.

Classroom tests

- provide the richest and most comprehensive measure of your child's educational progress;
- measure how well students have learned specific information about topics and themes that have been taught in the classroom;
- provide quick results on the basis of which teachers can adjust or modify their approach to teaching and
- may have a subjective component based on the teacher's knowledge of your child.

EQAO assessments

- are given at the end of key stages in a child's education;
- are administered, scored and reported on in a consistent and objective manner;
- test students on the same skills, using the same questions used for every other student in the province and
- allow student achievement to be assessed in relation to a provincial standard.

Is the OSSLT based on the material taught in the classroom?

Yes. The OSSLT is based on *The Ontario Curriculum*, which details the knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop in each subject at each grade level.

How can I support my child in writing the OSSLT?

The best way to support your child in writing the test is by supporting his or her success at school throughout the year. Sample Reading and Writing selections as well as test questions are available on the EQAO website at www.eqao.com. You may want to spend time with your child going over the sample student responses provided on the website. These responses provide a guideline of expectations for a Level 3 response. (Level 3 or 300 out of a possible 400 points is a pass.) You should also promote good reading habits. Daily or weekly reading of a local newspaper is also helpful as many reading selections are adapted from local Ontario newspapers.

Please refer to the EQAO's document *Be informed. Be ready.* which outlines the OSSLT, and offers helpful tips.

How are these government provided sample OSSLT materials to be used?

The sample booklets provided at www.eqao.com have a different format from that used for the actual administration of the test and do not include field-test materials. The sample test items are presented in the same order as in the actual test booklets and with the same instructions. The correct responses to multiple-choice questions are provided in the Answer Keys. The Student Answer Sheet on which students record their answers is also included.

What are the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful students?

Unsuccessful	Successful
The unsuccessful student's work is characterized by: Simplicity In ideas and sparse supporting details; in understanding and use of forms (e.g., personal essay, graphs and charts); and in vocabulary use	The successful student's work is characterized by: Complexity Big ideas, details selected to support generalizations; broad vocabulary; connects purposes, audience, and form
Repetition The small set of ideas selected from texts or chosen for writing are used repeatedly; narrow range of skill sets for choice of vocabulary and sentence structure; syntax is often drawn from oral language	Variety Range of literacy and fluency skills; navigates and adopts different types of expression; produces own ideas; syntax is that of written language where appropriate; flexibility of expression
Concreteness Focus on specifics of tasks; straight-forward purposes in reading or writing; heavy reliance on personal experience for evidence	Abstraction Uses symbols and visualization in understanding and expression; transfers skills and prior knowledge to new situations

What do the OSSLT results tell me?

Students who pass will receive a mark out of 400. Students who fail and receive a mark of 299 or under will also receive detailed information showing the reading and writing selections they answered correctly or incorrectly.

How can my child's OSSLT results be appealed?

Students who wish to appeal their results on the OSSLT must contact their school's principal, who will submit the request on their behalf. Once the appeal has been considered, EQAO will notify principals of the results directly.

If my child does not succeed, can my child write the OSSLT again?

Yes. Anyone who does not succeed will have the opportunity to write the test again. Students who have been eligible to write the OSSLT at least twice and have been unsuccessful at least once are eligible to fulfill the requirement through the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC). (Principals have the discretion to allow students to enroll in the course before they have a second opportunity to take the test, if the principal determines that it is in the best educational interests of the student (Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum 127).

Will the OSSLT results appear on my child's diploma?

A student's secondary school transcript will indicate that the student has completed the OSSLT as one of the 32 requirements for the OSSD.

Where can I get more information?

More Questions and Answers have been developed specifically for parents and can be found in 21 different languages, along with other useful information at www.eqao.com.