

# Questions and Answers for Parents About the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)

## 1. What is tested on the OSSLT?

The OSSLT evaluates the literacy skills students are expected to have learned across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9, according to [The Ontario Curriculum](#).

## 2. How is the OSSLT different from the tests that my child already writes in class?

Classroom tests and EQAO tests have different goals and provide different kinds of information.

### Classroom tests

- measure how well students have learned specific information and take place throughout a particular school year;
- provide immediate information on student learning that teachers can use to modify teaching strategies in their classrooms;
- are developed, administered and scored independently by teachers and may have subjective grading components, based on teachers' knowledge of individual students and
- provide results that may not be comparable across the school, board or province.

### EQAO assessments

- measure students' cumulative knowledge and skills at key stages of their education in relation to a provincial standard;
- provide annual information on student learning that teachers, schools, school boards and the province can use to monitor progress and plan for improvement;
- are developed and administered by Ontario teachers;
- are scored in a consistent and objective manner by Ontario teachers and other qualified individuals who have completed specific training and
- provide results that are comparable across the school, board and province from year to year.

## 3. Are all students required to write the OSSLT?

The provincial tests are part of Ontario's public education program, as outlined in [The Education Quality and Accountability Office Act](#). All students working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) must take the OSSLT. The OSSLT is a minimum-competency test. Successful completion of the OSSLT is the primary way to satisfy the literacy requirement for the OSSD.

## 4. How are students with special education needs supported on the OSSLT?

Students with special education needs who are on an Individual Education Plan (IEP) are permitted some accommodations on the OSSLT that are consistent with their regular practice for classroom assessments. You can refer to EQAO's guide [How To Administer the OSSLT](#) for more information.

## 5. How are English language learners supported on the OSSLT?

English language learners are permitted some special provisions on the OSSLT that are consistent with their regular practice for classroom assessments. You can refer to EQAO's guide [How To Administer the OSSLT](#) for more information.

## 6. Are exemptions or deferrals permitted?

Students who are working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) cannot be exempted from writing the OSSLT. The OSSLT is a minimum-competency test and is the primary way to satisfy the literacy requirement for graduation. You can refer to EQAO's [Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions](#) for more information.

In some cases, it is possible for students who have not yet acquired the reading and writing skills appropriate to Grade 9 to defer writing the OSSLT until the following year.

## 7. When is the OSSLT administered?

Each year, all students across Ontario write the OSSLT on the same date, usually in late March or early April. A list of upcoming [assessment dates](#) is available on our Web site.

## 8. How is the OSSLT administered?

The OSSLT is administered consistently across the province by Ontario educators. Students are given 75 minutes to write each of the two test booklets. [Examples of the test booklets](#), are available on our Web site.

EQAO is in the midst of a multi-year project to [move the provincial assessment program online](#).

**9. What happens if my child is absent on the day of the OSSLT?**

If your child is absent on the day the OSSLT is administered, he or she will not be able to participate in the test. This means that your child will lose the opportunity to fulfill the literacy requirement for graduation for the school year. He or she will have to take the OSSLT the next time it is administered, in the next school year.

Students who are expected to participate in the OSSLT but do not do so are still included in the public reporting of results. Since the publicly funded education system is accountable for every student, EQAO reports on every student. If a student is expected to write the OSSLT but does not do so, he or she is counted as absent, and therefore as having no data, in EQAO's reporting.

**10. How should my child prepare for the assessment?**

Since the OSSLT is 100% based on *The Ontario Curriculum*, no special preparation is required. To become familiar with the format of the test and the types of questions that will be asked, you can view [examples of the assessment booklets](#).

**11. How are EQAO assessments scored?**

On all EQAO assessments, multiple-choice responses are machine-scored. Responses to open-response questions on the OSSLT are scored by Ontario educators and other qualified individuals who have gone through specialized training and passed a qualification test. This video explains more about [How EQAO Tests Are Created, Administered and Scored](#).

**12. When will I receive my child's results?**

Each student who writes the assessment will receive his or her results in early June of the same school year. See a [sample ISR](#) for more information.

Provincial results for all EQAO assessments are also reported in the fall following the assessment. [School and school board results](#) are published on EQAO's Web site.

**13. How are EQAO results reported?**

The OSSLT is a minimum-competency assessment. Achievement is therefore reported as "successful" or "unsuccessful."

Students who are successful have demonstrated the minimum level of literacy that is expected by the end of Grade 9.

**14. Will my child's EQAO results count toward his or her grades?**

The results do not count toward students' grades, but successful completion of the OSSLT, or the alternative literacy course, is a requirement for graduation.

**15. Are the results valid and reliable?**

Yes. EQAO's test development, monitoring and quality assurance processes are among the best in the world, and they ensure the validity and reliability of the agency's data. EQAO has reliability checks in place at every stage of the assessment cycle—from the development of the tests to scoring by teachers to the reporting of results. EQAO places the highest importance on the integrity of its data.

**16. How can I use my child's EQAO results to support his or her learning?**

When it comes to evaluating student learning, it is important to consider a wide range of information. EQAO results should be reviewed alongside your child's daily classroom work and other assessment and contextual information in order to gauge his or her learning and to determine where more support may be needed.

For students who are unsuccessful on the OSSLT, it is particularly important for teachers and parents to discuss how to work together to close learning gaps and improve student achievement before the end of high school.

**17. What do the results for my child's school tell me?**

School results show you how students in your school are doing in relation to those in your school board and across the province. They can help you understand your child's achievement in relation to that of other students and prepare you to take part in conversations about supporting student achievement.

You can talk to your child's teacher or principal about the importance of EQAO results for strengthening the learning programs in your child's school. Schools across Ontario use EQAO data, alongside other classroom data such as report card grades, attendance rates and contextual information, to develop their improvement plans

**18. What happens if my child is unsuccessful on the OSSLT?**

Students who are unsuccessful on the OSSLT have not satisfied the literacy requirement for graduation. Students may write the OSSLT more than once, however. Students who are unsuccessful on the OSSLT at least once may be eligible to take the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) in order to satisfy the literacy graduation requirement.

For students who are unsuccessful on the OSSLT, it is particularly important for teachers and parents to discuss how to work together to close learning gaps before the end of high school.

**19. Why does Ontario need province-wide assessments?**

EQAO results are a key measure of accountability in Ontario's education system and an important tool for improvement planning at the student, school, school board and provincial levels. A school system that is serious about continuous improvement must have system-wide evidence of student achievement that is objective and reliable. The assessment results highlight areas where students may need additional support. Educators, schools, boards and the province use these data to target teaching and learning initiatives.