

Parent's Guide to Higher Learning Standards

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS

In 2010, the New York State Board of Regents adopted rigorous, college and career readiness learning standards to make sure that all children are prepared to succeed once they graduate from high school. This guide is designed to help you understand what the standards mean for your child, what happens in the classroom, and what you can do at home to help your child.

Why Are Higher Learning Standards Important?

Higher learning standards are important because they will help all children – no matter who they are – develop the skills they need to succeed in the next grade level and in the future. The standards are clear expectations for what your child should know and be able to do in key areas: **reading, writing, speaking** and **listening, language, and mathematics**. The following overview breaks down the standards and offers suggestions for how you can work with your child's teacher to help your child succeed.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)

The more rigorous ELA standards improve on the former standards by emphasizing the types of reading and writing that students will need to do in college, careers, and beyond. These improvements are called shifts. The chart below shows what shifted, what you might see in your child's backpack, and what you can do at home.

What Shifted?	What to Look for in the Backpack	What Can You Do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will read more non-fiction in each grade level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for your kids to have more reading assignments based on real-life events, such as biographies, articles, and historical stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read non-fiction books with your children. Find ways to make reading fun and exciting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading more non-fiction texts will help your child learn about the world through reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for your kids to bring home more fact-based books about the world. For instance, your 1st grader or kindergartener might read Clyde Robert Bulla's <i>A Tree is a Plant</i>. This book helps students learn about science through reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know what non-fiction books are grade-level appropriate and make sure your children have access to such books.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your children will read challenging texts very closely, so they can make sense of what they read and draw their own conclusions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your kids will have reading and writing assignments that might ask them to retell or write about key parts of a story or book. For example, your 2nd or 3rd grader might be asked to read aloud Faith D'Aluisio's non-fiction book titled <i>What the World Eats</i> and retell facts from the story. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide more challenging texts for your kids to read. Show them how to dig deeper into difficult pieces.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When it comes to writing or retelling a story, your children will use "evidence" gathered from the text to support what they say. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for written assignments that ask your child to draw on concrete examples from the text that serve as evidence. Evidence means examples from the book that your child will use to support a response or conclusion. This is different from the opinion questions that have been used in the past. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask your child to provide evidence in everyday discussions and disagreements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your kids will learn how to write from what they read. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for writing assignments that ask your child to make arguments in writing using evidence. For 4th and 5th graders, this might mean reading and writing about <i>The Kid's Guide to Money</i>, a non-fiction book by Steve Otfinoski. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage writing at home. Write together using evidence and details.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will have an increased academic vocabulary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for assignments that stretch your children's vocabulary and teach them that "language is power." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read often to babies, toddlers, preschoolers, and children.

MATHEMATICS

To improve student learning, the college and career readiness standards in math challenge students to understand and apply concepts, not just memorize math formulas. These changes are called shifts. The chart below shows what shifted, what you might see in your child's backpack, and what you can do at home.

What Shifted?	What to Look for in the Backpack	What Can You Do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will <u>work more deeply in fewer topics</u>, which will ensure full understanding. (Less is more!) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for assignments that require students to show their work and explain how they arrived at an answer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know what concepts are important for your children based on their grade level and spend time working on those concepts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will <u>keep building on learning year after year</u>, starting with a strong foundation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for assignments that build on one another. For example, students will focus on adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. Once these areas are mastered, they will focus on fractions. Building on that, they will then focus on algebra. You should be able to see the progression in the topics they learn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of what concepts your child struggled with last year and support your child in those challenge areas moving forward.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will <u>spend time practicing and memorizing math facts</u>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for assignments that ask your child to master math facts such as addition groupings up to 20 or multiplication tables. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help your child know and memorize basic math facts. Ask your child to "do the math" that pops up in daily life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your children will <u>understand why the math works and be asked to talk about and prove their understanding</u>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your children might have assignments that ask them to show or explain their mathematical thinking – to say WHY they think their answer is the right one. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to your children about their math homework and ask them to teach you new concepts. Help them figure out ways to explain their thinking.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will now be asked to <u>use math in real-world situations</u>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for math assignments that are based on the real world. For instance, homework for 5th graders might include adding fractions as part of a dessert recipe or determining how much pizza friends ate based on fractions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide time every day for your child to work on math at home.

TALKING TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

When talking to your child's teacher, try to keep the conversation focused on the most important topics that relate to your child. This means asking the teacher how your child is performing based on grade-level standards and expectations.

Also, ask to see a sample of your child's work. Compare your child's samples to those found at <http://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-common-core-sample-questions>. Also, feel free to bring those samples to your child's teacher and ask the teacher to explain how the samples are used in the classroom.

This information will enable you to make important adjustments at home that can help your child succeed in the classroom.

For more information, please visit www.nysed.gov or www.engageny.org or contact your local principal or superintendent.