Foundational Reading Skills Screeners

NYC Public Schools Reads

FAQ for NYCPS Families and Caregivers

One of our biggest goals at New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) is to make sure all of our students read well. This is why we are focused on NYC Reads, and why we are grateful for your partnership in supporting your child's learning! To know how each student is reading and how to support their learning, three times a year we give all students a reading check-up called a "foundational reading skills screener." Below, we answer ten common questions about the screeners.

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1. **What is the foundational reading skills screener? Why is my child taking it?**
   NYC Reads is an effort to help all NYCPS students read well. As part of NYC Reads, all students are given a foundational reading skills screener three times a year. The screener is a reading check-up that helps teachers understand your child's strengths and what they need to improve. Your school may use the Acadience, Amplify, i-Ready, MAP, or STAR screener.
2. **What does the screener help teachers understand?**
   The screener helps teachers understand your child's foundational reading skills. Reading has two parts: decoding (sounding words out) and understanding (knowing what words mean and what stories are about). To decode and understand, there are five foundational reading skills: hearing sounds in words (phonemic awareness), knowing the sounds letters make (phonics), knowing words (vocabulary), reading smoothly (fluency), and understanding what words and texts mean (comprehension). The screener tells teachers how your child is progressing with these skills so they can provide targeted instruction, such as extra practice and/or enrichment.
3. **What does my child do during the screener check-up? Should my child study for it?**
   Your child will participate in an in-class reading check-up (usually no more than 60 minutes) that will ask questions to assess their foundational reading skills. The screener may involve one-on-one work with a teacher or a computer-based assessment. Your child does not need to study or prepare in any way.

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4. **How will I learn about my child's screener results?**
   You can find your child's results on your NYC Schools Account (**schoolsaccount.nyc**). Log in, click on "MyStudent" and then on the "Reading and Math Progress" tab. Reading screener results are in the column with "Acadience, Amplify, i-Ready, MAP, or STAR" in Assessment Name (first column) and "Reading" in Subject (second column). You will also see the Assessment Period for Beginning, Middle, and End of School Year.
   You will see a "Scoring Explanation," which will say "performing above grade-level," "performing at grade-level," or "in need of support in order to be performing at grade level." This reflects your child's progress toward the target skills for their grade at the time of year that the screener was given. If you don't see results, contact your child's teacher.

5. **What if my child needs more support to perform at grade level?**
   If your child is not yet performing at grade level, they may need support. If your child needs support, your child's teacher will provide it, for example, in small group instruction. If your child is not yet performing on grade level, it may also mean the skills tested have not yet been taught in class. Your child's teacher can help you understand if that is the case.

6. **What if my child is learning to speak and read in English?**
   Sometimes assessments do not give the full picture of what your child knows because they are still learning English. Talk with your child's teacher about what they know in their home language. For example, share if your child can recognize rhymes, knows their letters, can read, can write, and more in their home language.

7. **What if my child is enrolled in a bilingual program, learning to read in two languages?**
   All suggestions in this resource can be used in your home language. Your home language is valued and can help your child to learn to read. It is okay if your child is making more progress in one language over the other; their skills will transfer to the second language. Ask your child's teacher about their progress in both languages.

8. **I don't see my child's Fountas & Pinnell (F&P) reading level (A-Z) like I did in prior years. Why not?**
   In prior years, NYCPS used assessments that assigned students reading levels A through Z. These assessments do not fully allow teachers to understand students' ability to sound out words—a key skill for all readers. So, NYC PS is now using screeners that allow teachers to understand students' progress across all foundational reading skills.

9. **Is a screener the same as the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) Test?**
   No. The New York State ELA test is a two-day test that students in grades 3–8 take each spring. Students answer multiple-choice questions and write responses to open-ended questions based on passages they read. The ELA test assesses a wide-range of skills; screeners assess specific foundational reading skills.

10. **What can I do to support my child as a reader?**
    At NYCPS, it's our job to teach all children to read. To support at home, ask your child's teacher how your child is doing and what you can do to help. You can also:
    - Talk! Speak with your child in your home language. This builds vocabulary and background knowledge.
    - Visit the library or our FREE e-Library, Sora (**soraapp.com/welcome**). Choose books that interest your child.
    - Play word games. Games like Scrabble, Boggle, or word searches improve vocabulary and word recognition.
    - Set a reading routine: A reading routine, like 20 minutes of reading after dinner, helps make reading a habit. Your child can read independently, with an adult, or to a younger sibling or cousin.
    - Find more ideas on **schools.nyc.gov/LiteraryResources**.