



Ossining Union Free School District

Parent Guide to English Language Arts

April 2, 2008

Ossining Union Free School District

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HOW THIS GUIDE IS ORGANIZED

The purpose of this guide is to help parents understand Ossining's approach to English Language Arts from First Steps through 12th Grade. We have laid it out in two sections. The first section describes the district's literacy expectations for Ossining children. For each expectation (or what we call literacy attributes), we explain what it means and why it is important. Then, we describe what your child will be doing in school to acquire each attribute. Finally, we provide suggestions for how you can support your child at home, and activities your child can engage in on his or her own. If all these contributions are made, your child should progress steadily toward the district's expectations.

The second section walks you through the new report cards, so you can easily understand where your child is, relative to Ossining's expectations. Most of what is on the report cards should be familiar, but this guide helps to clarify any questions you might have.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Visit our website to learn more about the *Ossining Literacy Initiative*: <http://www.ossiningufsd.org/>

Literacy Attributes

Receptive Literacy

Reading
Listening
Viewing
Knowledge of the World

Expressive Literacy

Writing
Speaking
Representing

OSSINING'S LITERACY EXPECTATIONS FOR FIRST STEPS THROUGH GRADE 12

Ossining's literacy expectations are divided into receptive and expressive areas. *Receptive literacy* is all about children making sense of what they read, hear, and view. It also includes having an extensive background knowledge. *Expressive literacy* refers to children communicating ideas through writing, speaking, and representing their thoughts through various media (drawing, modeling, drama, electronic media, etc.).

Each of these literacy areas is broken down into specific expectations:

Receptive Literacy Attributes

Reading

Decodes Fluently

Reads Expressively

Understands Informational Texts

Understands Literary Texts

Understands "Big Ideas"

Has an Extensive Reading Vocabulary

Reads Widely

Listening

Is a Critical and Responsive Listener

Viewing

Is a Critical and Responsive Viewer

Knowledge of the World

Has Extensive Background Knowledge

Expressive Literacy Attributes

Writing

Communicates Ideas Effectively

Develops and Organizes Writing

Uses Effective Language/Style

Uses Correct/Appropriate Mechanics

Speaking

Communicates Ideas Effectively

Representing

Communicates Ideas Effectively in a Variety of Media

What are Literacy Attributes?

Literacy Attributes represent what we want a child to *know, do, understand, and to have experienced* in language arts:

- reading (making sense of what is read)
- listening (making sense of what is heard)
- viewing (making sense of what is observed)
- knowledge of the world (understanding the world around and beyond oneself)
- writing (expressing ideas in written form)
- speaking (expressing ideas in spoken form)
- representing (expressing ideas in a variety of media)

READING

Reading--making sense of text--is a basic language skill that is made up of the following attributes: decoding fluently, reading expressively, understanding informational and literary texts, understanding big ideas, having an extensive reading vocabulary, and reading widely. In the section below, we explain each of these attributes, why they are important, and say what your child will be doing in school. We also suggest how you can support your child, and what your child can do on his or her own.

Decodes Fluently

By decoding fluently, we mean that a child is able to decode authentic text at an appropriate level, using appropriate reading strategies, at an appropriate rate, and with accuracy.

Why is decoding fluently important?

A child's ability to rapidly and automatically decode the printed symbols on a page is critical to skilled reading. However, decoding is only one aspect of reading, and it has to be taught alongside comprehension.

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice basic conventions of print (e.g., left-to-right progression, return sweep, one-to-one correspondence, etc.)
- Children will be immersed in a print-rich environment.
- Teachers model and teach strategies for using and integrating cue systems (visual, meaning, structural) within authentic text.

What are cue systems?

Cue systems are sources of information children use simultaneously to make sense of text:

- Visual cues--knowledge of letters, letter-sounds, and spelling patterns.
- Meaning cues--what the child already knows about the content of the text.
- Structural cues--using knowledge of grammar, word order, and word parts.

What is direct instruction?

- Teachers provide direct instruction in decoding skills when appropriate and necessary.

How can you support your child's growth in decoding fluency?

- Read aloud daily to your child, including alphabet books, rhymes, etc.
- Play word and letter games.
- Use teachable moments to introduce or reinforce letters, letter-sounds, and words as they appear in books, on television, or in daily life.
- Support your child's natural curiosity about print, and follow his/her lead.

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can "read" books on his or her own after a parent has shared them.
- Ask grown-ups to read aloud daily.
- Your child can play with letters, word cards, word games on his/her own, with siblings or friends.
- Your child can look for text in the environment, and try to say the word(s) (and ask someone to read them).

Reads Expressively

Reading expressively is defined as reading a passage, poem or other text aloud, using appropriate intonation, volume, phrasing, expression, and attention to punctuation, so that the meaning of the text is communicated to the listener, and is pleasant to hear.

Why is reading expressively important?

Reading expressively is a valuable skill both in school (e.g., being able to read aloud to peers, or a wider audience) and beyond (e.g., reading to one's family). Reading expressively both contributes to reading comprehension as well as providing evidence of understanding.

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers provide frequent opportunities for children to read aloud (one-on-one, small group, and large groups).
- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice strategies for

reading with expression (e.g., audibility, phrasing, intonation, etc.)

- Teachers provide constructive feedback and coaching to children as they are learning to read expressively.

How can you support your child's growth toward reading expressively?

- Read aloud daily to your child, and model expressive reading strategies as you read.
- Provide opportunities for your child to read to you and others (siblings, friends).

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can "read" books aloud on his or her own after a parent has shared them with expression.

Authentic Text

Authentic text is what you find in real books, and that's the text we want our children to be able to decode and understand.

READING

Understands Informational Texts

By understanding informational texts, we mean the child's ability to make sense of nonfiction material and be able to respond appropriately to textbooks, primary source documents, newspapers, magazines, etc., across the various subject areas, as well as in everyday life.

Why is understanding informational text important?

Traditionally, schools have emphasized fiction over nonfiction in their reading material, and this attribute aims to better balance the two. Reading across the curriculum demands proficiency in informational reading (e.g., textbooks, primary source documents, nonfiction trade books, magazines), as does the increasing amount and complexity of informational text beyond school (e.g., tax forms). Further, New York State emphasizes nonfiction texts in both English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies examinations throughout the grades. Understanding informational text contributes to background knowledge and helps children think more critically about the world around them.

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers engage children in reading a wide range of informational texts (both print and electronic media), representing a variety of content and voices.
- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice and reflect on strategies for reading and understanding informational texts (e.g., self-monitoring, making connections, active questioning, making use of text features such as bold type or captions, etc.).
- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice supporting responses to informational texts with appropriate evidence.

How can you support your child's growth toward understanding informational texts?

- Include nonfiction material in selecting daily read alouds to your child.
- Encourage your child to read nonfiction on his/her own, and support his/her curiosity and interest in nonfiction topics.
- Talk with your child about nonfiction topics (news, weather, sports, etc.).

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can read nonfiction books, magazines, and newspapers on his or her own, or after a parent has shared them.

Understands Literary Texts

By understanding literary texts, we mean the child's ability to make sense of, and be able to respond appropriately to literature. Literary texts include classic and contemporary literature in both prose and poetic forms.

Why is understanding literary text important?

Understanding literary texts develops critical thinking. New York State emphasizes children's understanding of literary aspects of what is read (e.g., the way a character is portrayed, the writer's style, literary elements such as flashback, etc.). Literary understanding is essential to passing the Regent's English examination in 11th grade, and for college.

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers provide children with frequent opportunities to read, respond, and discuss diverse forms of literature.
- Teachers expose children to, and teach a wide variety of literary aspects of text.
- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice supporting literary or personal responses with appropriate evidence.

How can you support your child's growth toward understanding literary texts?

- Include literary material in selecting daily read alouds to your child (don't forget poetry!).
- Encourage your child to read literary works on his/her own, and support his/her curiosity and interest in literature.
- Talk with your child about the literature he or she is reading.
- Read the books your child is reading in school, so you can discuss them with your child.

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can develop an interest in an author and read his/her works.
- Your child can ask his/her teacher or librarian for suggestions.

What do we mean by Fiction, Nonfiction, and Primary Source Documents?

Fiction describes books, poetry and other material that tells stories that aren't actually true, but usually are based on real-life or life-like characters or events.

Nonfiction describes books and other material that provides information about true events or people, or shows readers how to do things (e.g., make recipes, construct buildings).

Primary Source Documents are typically pamphlets, maps, posters, cartoons, letters, etc. that have significance in history or current events (e.g., Declaration of Independence, Civil War letters, ancient maps). Many state exams ask document-based questions (DBQs) about primary source material.

READING

Understands Big Ideas

By understanding big ideas, we mean the child's ability to make sense of the moral of a fable, the underlying theme of a novel, or the message an author or poet is trying to communicate through a literary work. Big ideas occur in books, magazines, movies, music, and art, not just in literature.

Why is understanding big ideas important?

This attribute becomes increasingly important as children reach for excellence in reading, and engage in difficult reading material. New York State emphasizes reading for *critical analysis and evaluation*, stressing the importance of children's ability to analyze, synthesize, relate, critique and evaluate big ideas, not just in school but also throughout their lives.

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers engage children in many and varied texts with multiple layers of meaning (during read-alouds, guided/shared, and independent reading).
- Teachers provide children with opportunities to revise and deepen their understanding of texts through discussion and reflection.
- Teachers model, teach and have children practice a range of strategies for analyzing, making connections, and synthesizing multiple layers of meaning .

How can you support your child's growth toward understanding big ideas?

- Engage your child in conversations about big ideas appropriate to their age and interests.
- Support your child's interest in learning about big ideas (e.g., global warming).
- Share the lessons or morals of a book you are reading with your child, even at a young age.

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can read books with multiple layers of meaning.
- Your child can discuss big ideas with teachers, parents, and friends.
- Big ideas can be explored in writing and drawing, too.

Has an Extensive Vocabulary

Having an extensive reading vocabulary means that a child understands the meanings of a large number of words, and can use this knowledge to assist in making sense of text. We want our children to have good reading vocabularies—words they encounter in books and other material—and know what these words mean. Children also need to have strategies for figuring out unknown words.

Why is vocabulary important?

Children who understand the meanings of words have a head start on understanding whole texts, as well as understanding concepts across the content areas. Vocabulary is also connected to background knowledge.

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers expose children to rich vocabulary in a wide variety of literature (through read-alouds, shared reading, independent reading).
- Teachers model, teach, and analyze multiple meanings of words, figurative language, technical language, content area vocabulary, and the importance of rich vocabulary.
- Teachers engage children in conversation that will enrich their vocabulary.
- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice strategies for figuring out meanings of words (e.g., context clues, root words, affixes, etc.)

How can you support your child's development of an extensive vocabulary?

- Share words, expressions, and figures of speech with your child (they will pick up on the language you use).
- Always encourage your child to ask the meanings of words they don't understand.
- Include in your read-alouds books that have sophisticated language, and explain the meanings of words encountered in them.

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can develop personal strategies for figuring out the meanings of unknown words.
- Your child can ask about, or look up, the meanings of words encountered in reading.

What's a big idea?

What an author, poet, speaker, or artist is really trying to communicate
The life lessons and deeper understandings a reader, listener, or viewer takes from a 'text'
The main point of a book, magazine article, argument, film, or painting
The moral of a story, the underlying theme of a novel

READING

Reads Widely

By reading widely, we mean that children have read a substantial amount of books and other material on their own. Second, that they have read across genres (fiction, nonfiction, poetry), different forms of print (books, magazines, newspapers, primary source documents, electronic media), different purposes (information, pleasure, etc.), diversity (of culture, authors, gender, etc.), and from a variety of content areas (e.g., science, social studies, music, art, etc.).

Why is reading widely important?

Reading widely is a critical ingredient of reading well. It not only provides children with invaluable practice in reading skills, it also builds up background knowledge of topics, and of the various forms of print. Both the amount of reading and the breadth are critical for children to become 'well read.'

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers model reading from a variety of printed sources, including genre, diversity, forms of print, and purpose.
- Teachers provide children access to a substantial amount and a wide variety of printed and electronic material in classrooms, and in the school library.
- Teachers provide frequent opportunities, and encouragement, for children to read a substantial amount, and read widely (including self-selected and teacher-prompted material).
- Teachers provide frequent opportunities for children to share reading experiences.

How can you support your child's growth toward reading widely?

- Choose a wide range of materials to include in your daily read-alouds to your child.
- Provide a wide selection of reading material in the home for your child to access. Include material borrowed from school or public libraries.

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can take advantage of a wide range of materials from home, school, and public libraries.
- Your child can explore different kinds of reading material (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, poetry; a variety of authors, etc.)

L

istening

Is A Critical and Responsive Listener

The most common definition of listening is 'paying attention' or 'following directions.' These are important behaviors, but for us, listening is primarily cognitive. We define critical listening as the child's ability to understand, analyze and evaluate what is heard, and to be able to discriminate between what's significant and what isn't. We define responsive listening as the child's ability to listen with empathy, considering others' points of view.

Why is listening important?

When you consider the amount of information that is spoken in the real world, the ability to understand what others are saying, and being able to respond appropriately and to act on that information is a life-long skill. In everyday life, listening with a sympathetic ear is also a valuable attribute.

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers provide children with frequent opportunities to engage in listening to a wide variety of material (fiction, nonfiction, poetry; newspapers and magazines, etc.)
- Teachers expose children to a variety of speakers and voices for different purposes (e.g., for information, debate, social interaction, etc.).
- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice strategies for all aspects of listening (e.g., note-taking, graphic organizers, visualizing, responding, etc.)

How can you support your child's growth toward critical and responsive listening?

- Model good listening by giving your child your undivided attention when he/she is speaking.
- Engage your child in thoughtful conversation about what they have heard.
- Expose your child to a variety of listening experiences (radio, speeches, plays, musical performances, stories on tape, read-alouds, etc.).

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can seek out opportunities for listening (e.g., listen to radio programs, download podcasts, go to musical performances, attend poetry readings, etc.).
- Your child can actively reflect on, and develop critical and responsive listening skills in everyday conversations with peers and adults. For example, paraphrase and clarify what someone has said, asking questions and giving supportive feedback.
- Your child can learn how to be a good listener (e.g., put himself/herself in the speaker's shoes, and try to understand what is said from a speaker's perspective).

V

iewing

Is A Critical and Responsive Viewer

Viewing is making sense of what is seen or observed. Viewing is similar to listening—the child can organize, synthesize and apply information in a variety of ways. A critical viewer, like a critical listener, can analyze and evaluate what is seen, and can discriminate what is significant from what is not.

Why is Viewing important?

As literacy in the real world becomes more digital and less purely textual, the ability to make sense of information that combines text, graphics, and video becomes more important for children to possess.

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers provide children with frequent opportunities to view, analyze, and discuss a range of visual material (e.g., film, art, cartoons, charts and graphs, diagrams, websites, advertisements, demonstrations, etc.)
- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice strategies for viewing for information and critical understanding.

How can you support your child's growth toward critical and responsive viewing?

- Engage your child in thoughtful conversation about what they have observed.
- Expose your child to a variety of situations to support critical and responsive viewing (visits to museums, walks in the neighborhood, sporting events, trips locally or to distant places).

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can seek out opportunities for viewing on his/her own (e.g., walks, trips to museums, school outings, summer camps, bird watching).
- Your child can actively reflect on, and develop critical and responsive viewing skills in everyday life (e.g., keep a bird-watching journal, make sketches, design science experiments).

Knowledge of the **W**orld

Has Extensive Background Knowledge

Background knowledge is defined as what a child knows about scientific, historical, literary, geographical, political, cultural and other aspects of the world.

Why is background knowledge important?

Background knowledge plays a critical role in receptive—and expressive—language development. All New York State assessments emphasize knowledge of content and the vocabulary that accompanies and defines it. The more a child knows about the world, the easier it is for him/her to read and understand any kind of material. Broadening and deepening the background knowledge of all children is a major goal of Ossining's Literacy Initiative.

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers provide children with frequent opportunities for children to interact directly and indirectly with the world around and beyond them (through field trips, cultural events, projects/inquiries, books, magazines, newspapers, radio/TV, video, etc).
- Teachers engage children in activities that broaden and deepen their interests and understanding of the world around and beyond them.
- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice strategies for building background knowledge and vocabulary.

How can you support your child's growth toward an extensive background knowledge?

- Share with your child your own interest and knowledge about science, history, literature, geography, politics, and culture.
- Engage your child in thoughtful conversation about the world around and beyond them.
- Explain the meanings of words to your child.
- Expose your child to a variety of situations that build background knowledge (e.g., trips to museums, television documentaries, journeys to other states or countries).

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can seek out opportunities for enlarging background knowledge (e.g., engage in hobbies, read magazines, watch documentaries).
- Your child can seek out the meanings of new words encountered in everyday life and in reading material.

WRITING

We define writing as communicating ideas effectively in written form. Writing has four attributes: *Communicates Ideas Effectively, Develops and Organizes Writing, Uses Effective Language/Style, and Uses Correct/Appropriate Mechanics.*

Communicates Ideas Effectively

Why is communicating ideas important?

The ability to express oneself clearly in writing is important in and beyond school. We want children to communicate ideas in their writing that are significant to them and their readers. Children should be able to write effectively with respect to *purpose* (to describe, inform, entertain, persuade); *audience* (self, trusted adult or peer, wider audiences); and *content* (the topic and task).

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers expose children to, and analyze with them, examples of writing that represent a variety of purposes, audiences, and topics.
- Teachers provide children with regular opportunities to write on a variety of topics, for authentic audiences and purposes.
- Teachers model, teach and have children practice strategies for communicating meaningful ideas in writing for authentic purposes and audiences.
- Teachers balance on-demand writing with extended compositions.

How can you support your child's growth toward communicating ideas effectively?

- Provide your child with authentic opportunities to write (lists, journals, diaries, thank-you cards).
- Provide your child with the appropriate materials for writing, and a place to write.
- Encourage your child's early attempts at writing, with a special emphasis on meaning.
- Ask your child's teacher how you can support writing at home.

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can seek out daily opportunities for writing (making lists, keeping a diary, writing thank-you notes, writing stories or plays).
- Your child can share writing with friends and family, and reflect on the feedback from this sharing.
- Your child can read compositions aloud to hear how well they communicate what she or he is trying to say.

Develops and Organizes Writing

Why is development and organization important?

Development and *organization* refer to the internal structure and the flow within a piece of writing. We want children to learn how to write logically and clearly, with writing that is well developed and organized.

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers expose children to, and have them analyze, a wide range of organizing structures in writing (e.g., lists, letters, essays, thesis).
- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice strategies for developing and organizing their writing (e.g., outlining, Inspiration software), as well as strategies for revising.

How can you support your child's growth toward developing and organizing writing?

- Read your child's writing and provide feedback as a reader ("Can you explain this part to me?" "I'm not sure how you go from this part of the story to the next. . .").
- Ask your child's teacher how you can support your child's writing development and organization.

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can look at how writers organize and develop their writing in reading material (newspapers, magazines, books, poetry), and learn from their techniques.
- Your child can practice different ways of developing and organizing writing, and seek feedback from peers and adults.

WRITING

Uses Effective Language/Style

Why is Effective Language/Style important?

Effective Language/Style is primarily about the writer's voice (differentiating between personal and professional, formal and informal), and learning how to control written language to produce particular effects in writing). Not only is this attribute important in New York State English Language Arts Assessments across the grades, it has significant value in writing in college, and in daily life (e.g., writing letters to newspapers or legislators).

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers expose children to, and analyze with them, text that represents a wide range of styles, voices, and language usage.
- Teachers model, teach, and have children use effective language in their writing (e.g., word choice).
- Teachers help children discover and develop both personal and professional voices in their writing.

How can you support your child's growth toward using Effective Language/Style?

- Share your enthusiasm for word choices, favorite sayings, and idiomatic language with your child as you read aloud daily.
- Encourage your child's attempts to write with voice and interesting language.
- Help your child notice the way that authors use interesting language.

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can look at how writers use language, and the way their writing is uniquely their own, and learn from their choices.
- Your child can try out interesting language in compositions, and seek feedback from peers and adults.
- Your child can read compositions aloud to hear how well the language sounds.

Uses Correct/Appropriate Mechanics

Why are Writing Mechanics important?

Writing Mechanics includes grammar (e.g., tense and number agreement, word order, sentence and paragraph structure, etc.), spelling, punctuation and capitalization, and presentation (handwriting, layout, word processing). These are important aspects of any writing that is shared with others (in school, in work, and in everyday life).

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers expose children to, and analyze with them, examples of positive and negative Writing Mechanics.
- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice correct/appropriate mechanics within authentic writing.

How can you support your child's growth toward using correct/appropriate mechanics?

- When reading your child's written compositions, celebrate his/her correct and appropriate spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting (don't just focus on errors!).
- Always remember that your child is still learning Writing Mechanics--errors are a normal part of writing growth.
- Ask your child's teacher how you can support your child's Writing Mechanics at home.

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can check for Writing Mechanics before sharing a composition with others (e.g., use a dictionary, ask friends or family, check with three individuals before sharing).
- Your child can read compositions aloud to check for mechanical errors.

SPEAKING

Communicates Ideas Effectively

There are two aspects of speaking, one that focuses on the content of what is spoken, and one on techniques. By communicating ideas, we mean that children have interesting and/or relevant things to say. By technique, we mean style, language, audience awareness, audibility, intonation, gestures, poise, and so on. The distinction between speaking (which is generally defined as making formal presentations), and talking (which includes engaging in productive conversation) is critical—and we should emphasize both.

Why is speaking important?

The ability to engage in productive conversation, to share information both informally and formally is an important attribute in school, home, work, and throughout one's life.

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers provide frequent opportunities for children to speak to a variety of audiences (e.g., peers, wider audiences; formal and informal settings).
- Teachers provide opportunities for children to revise and deepen their understanding through conversation.
- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice strategies for speaking for different purposes and in various contexts and also provide strategies that promote productive and thoughtful conversation.
- Teachers provide opportunities for constructive feedback and self-evaluation.

How can you support your child's growth toward communicating ideas effectively?

- Provide opportunities for your child to talk, ask questions, share opinions, and engage in social conversations.
- Support your child's development of speaking technique through modeling and supportive feedback.
- Provide opportunities for your child to read aloud to you.

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can speak up on topics that matter to him/her (e.g., initiate a conversation on endangered animals, recycling, etc.)
- Your child can practice being respectful when conversing with others (e.g., listening to others and giving them a chance to speak.)
- Your child can be sure that others can hear when he or she is speaking, and use appropriate gestures to help them understand.
- Your child can practice before reading aloud to the class, or making a presentation.

REPRESENTING

Communicates Ideas Effectively in a Variety of Media

Representing is communicating ideas in a variety of appropriate media (e.g., drawing, photography, role-playing, electronic media, charts, maps, models, etc.).

Why is representing important?

Representation is a skill that is increasingly demanded in the information age. Writing is a form of representation, but the ability to communicate ideas in other media is extremely valuable both in school and beyond. Children also will benefit from learning techniques for effective representations (e.g., multi-media presentations, drama, etc.).

What will your child be doing in school?

- Teachers provide frequent opportunities for children to create authentic representations of what they know or are learning.
- Teachers encourage (and sometimes require) children to use various forms of media presentation (e.g., multimedia, drawings, illustrations, models, maps, charts, dramatizations, photographs, etc.).
- Teachers model, teach, and have children practice strategies for making effective representations.

How can you support your child's growth toward communicating ideas effectively?

- Encourage your child to express himself/herself in a variety of ways (making models, drawing/painting, photography, making videos, participating in plays).
- Provide supportive feedback, as a viewer, about your child's representations done at school or at home.

How can your child help himself or herself?

- Your child can try out different ways of communicating ideas—through drawings, models, photography, etc.
- Your child can learn techniques (take lessons, look at examples in books, magazines, TV) for improving his or her skills in these representations.

SECTION TWO: UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S REPORT CARD

Understanding your child's report card...

The English/Language Arts section of Ossining's new report card is designed to give parents explicit information about their child. Literacy attributes are assessed and reported. This allows parents to compare their child's growth in English Language Arts from year to year.

Explanation of Performance Levels

Ossining aligns its scoring system to the New York State assessments. Child performance levels are documented on the report card as follows:

Description of Performance	Level
Exceeds grade-level expectations	4
Meets grade-level expectations	3
Is below grade-level expectations	2
Is significantly below grade-level expectations	1

It is important to note that grade-level expectations increase throughout the year. For example, at the first marking period, second grade children would need to score 18-20 on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) in order to meet Ossining's expectations for decoding authentic text fluently, but by May of 2nd grade, they would need to be scoring 28-30 on the DRA to meet the grade-level expectation.

How are performance levels determined?

Child performance in each literacy attribute is determined using evidence gathered from teacher observations, tasks (informal or formal assessments), analysis of work samples, and from one-on-one conferences with individual children. These different sources of evidence may be used singly or in combination with each other, depending on the literacy attribute.

Some attributes are assessed through the use of rubrics that specify the behaviors or skills related to each performance level. In the example (center), teachers gather samples

of a child's writing, and examine how they organize and develop their ideas. They then use the rubric to determine the child's performance level in a particular marking period.

How do I know if my child is meeting grade-level expectations?

A child who makes satisfactory progress is getting '3's across the majority of the attributes, which means that he/she is meeting grade-level expectations. Remember that satisfactory progress is always marked by a '3'. Across marking periods, and across grades, '3's show that your child is meeting steadily increasing performance standards, as the material being read or heard gets harder (in both ideas and syntax), and the

expectations for speaking and writing and representation keep going up.

K-2 Writing Attribute

Level	Develops and Organizes Writing
4	<i>Exceeds grade-level expectations...</i>
3	<i>Meets grade-level expectations...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishes a clear focus and direction • writes coherently • writing is well developed, examples support ideas and opinions
2	<i>Is below grade-level expectations...</i>
1	<i>Is significantly below grade-level expectations...</i>

How is effort figured into the levels?

Children's work habits and effort are recorded separately from the literacy attributes, because the attribute assessments are solely concerned with where a child is relative to the specific attribute, and this needs to be measured on its own, and not folded into how much effort the child is expending. Effort and work habits are important contributions to developing literacy attributes, but they aren't the attributes themselves. So, the report cards explicitly state each child's performance level, and then separately comment on how much effort the child is putting into his or her work. A child who is making good progress but who is not yet meeting grade-level expecta-

tions, will have that progress noted in parent-teacher conferences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following teachers, specialists, and administrators contributed to the articulation of the literacy attributes, instructional contributions, and the assessments described in this guide. Their hard work and thoughtful participation is gratefully acknowledged:

Giovanna Abbate, Literacy Coach

Nadia Bryan, Literacy Coach

Dorian Burden, 6th Grade English/Social Studies, Anne M. Dorner Middle School

Ann E. Dealy, Principal, Park School

Dr. Phyllis Glassman, Superintendent

Jonna Hammond, Reading Specialist, Park School

Valerie Hymes, Literacy Coach

Francine Jacobson, Assistant Principal, Claremont School

Rosemarie Masci, PreK Teacher, Roosevelt School

Elda McQuade, English as a Second Language Specialist, Claremont School

Jill Moore, Reading Teacher, Claremont School

Andrea Nardella, 3rd Grade Teacher, Brookside School

Letitia Payne, 7th/8th Special Education Teacher, Anne M. Dorner Middle School

Mirla R. Puello, Director of Literacy and English as a Second Language

Raymond Sanchez, Deputy Superintendent

Timothy Scholten, School Psychologist, Park School

Joseph Spero, Associate Principal, Ossining High School

Zoila Tazi, Principal, Roosevelt School

Dr. Helen Telford, AUSSIE Consultant

Dr. Sean Walmsley (Chair UA Reading Dept, Consultant)