



OSSLT Supports – Quick Reference for Leaders

This resource provides a quick reference for district school board and school leaders who are supporting educators and students in preparing for the 2017 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). The content is adapted from the Immediate Actions sections of the [2016 Student Achievement Literacy Planning Resource: Grades 7-12](#) released in September 2016.



Immediate actions address the literacy needs of Grade 10 students who have been assessed as needing support to meet the literacy graduation requirement through the OSSLT (e.g. those in applied courses and those who scored below the provincial standard on the Grade 6 EQAO), and students who have been previously unsuccessful on the OSSLT. Immediate actions include:

- Providing these students with targeted supports and interventions
- Building educator capacity to assess and respond to these students' specific needs, with a focus on the skills required for the OSSLT

Literacy Leadership

Improving student achievement in literacy requires leaders who hold high expectations and believe that all students can develop the literacy skills for success in school and life. Effective leaders inspire educators to share responsibility for literacy assessment and instruction. They mobilize resources to create supports and conditions for a board- and school-wide emphasis on literacy across all grades and subjects. Strong literacy leaders articulate the urgent need to assess and address the needs of students who are at risk of not meeting the literacy graduation requirement. These leaders create a call to action.



Immediate actions for literacy leadership

Ministry and system leaders provide literacy leadership in collaboration with school administrators and teams (e.g., Literacy, Special Education, and English as a Second Language) as they:

- Use a range of provincial and classroom assessments (e.g., Grade 6 and 9 EQAO data, Steps to English Proficiency [STEP], student work, OSSLT practice tests) and other evidence (e.g., conversations, observations, Individual Education Plans [IEPs], report cards, credit accumulation and demographics) to identify and determine the needs of students at immediate risk of not meeting the literacy graduation requirement.
- Use Individual Student Reports (ISRs) and Individual Item Results (IIRs) from EQAO to assess the need for interventions — including the Ontario Secondary Literacy Course (OSSLC) — for students who were unsuccessful on the OSSLT
- Align classroom and human resources with literacy priorities and goals to differentiate supports based on assessed school needs.

- Coordinate interventions and supports across all divisions and departments, including Spec Ed./ESL.
- Provide for literacy-focused courses such as Learning Strategies (GLS/GLE), Literacy Skills: Reading and Writing, Grade 10 (ELS 20) and English as a Second Language (ESL). (See p. 38 of Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2017 (OS) for timetabling strategies — available at: edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/ONSchools.pdf.)
- Review and update accommodations required for students with IEPs and Transition plans, as well as special provisions for English language learners (ELLs) adhering to the EQAO *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions for English Language Learners and Students With Special Education Needs* — available at: www.eqao.com/en/assessments/OSSLT/assessment-docs/accommodatons-guide-osslt-2016.pdf.
- Engage parents and students in understanding the literacy graduation requirement's importance and the lifelong need for literacy skills. (See resources available at: www.eqao.com/en/assessments/OSSLT/parents/Pages/Parents.aspx.)
- Review Student Success board and school immediate action plans and results for literacy in terms of student progress and help refine as necessary.
- Track students in the Taking Stock report and connect their literacy needs with its deliverables (e.g., individualized timetables, education and career life planning, strength-based profiles, and caring adults).

Support for Students in Literacy

Providing direct support to students allows for differentiation to address unique student interests, strengths, needs and learning preferences. To become literate lifelong learners, students must be actively engaged in developing and reflecting on their literacy skills, setting goals for improvement and taking actions to extend their learning. Leaders, teachers and teams put immediate supports in place such as:



Immediate actions to support students

Leaders, teachers and teams put supports in place that include:

- A range of literacy supports and interventions including tutoring, individualized timetables and literacy-based courses (e.g., ELS20)
- Multiple occasions to learn about OSSLT success criteria, deconstruct sample answers, complete practice tests (visit eqao.com), and get feedback to build test-taking skills and confidence
- Differentiated programming and instruction informed by the literacy profile and plan for each student, including the accommodations required by students with IEPs
- Peer support from previously successful students (e.g., mentoring or tutoring)
- Adaptations and supports to meet the needs of English Language Learners including ESL and English Literacy Development courses
- Access to Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee (OSAPAC) licensed software and explicit instruction on how to use it

Collaborative Professional Learning

Boards and schools offer collaborative professional learning, prioritizing Grade 10 teachers, particularly those who teach applied courses and students who have been previously unsuccessful on the OSSLT.



Immediate actions for collaborative professional learning

The immediate actions for professional learning provide opportunities for educators to:

- Build understanding of specific literacy skills and success criteria for the OSSLT/ literacy graduation requirement, how those skills connect with their subject and how to assess and teach them. The skill areas are:
 - Reading skills: understanding explicit and implicit messages and making connections
 - Writing skills: developing a main idea, organizing information and using conventions
- Increase precision in gathering and analysing data and evidence (e.g., conversations, observations and products) to assess student literacy skills and determine needs.
- Focus on explicit and differentiated literacy instruction informed by the student's profile and plan.
- Prioritize implementing the **Strategy** component of the *Adolescent Literacy Guide* (pp. 45-52) and the ALERTS recommended for addressing immediate needs in reading and writing, as well as using EQAO rubrics and samples with students.
- Access ministry Provincial Literacy Leads to build board and school leader and facilitator capacity.
- Choose from a range of continuous and differentiated professional learning about literacy (e.g., coaching, collaborative inquiry, additional qualification [AQ] courses in reading and writing).

Sample Practice

In one school, at the beginning of each school year, every Grade 10 student (as well as students who were unsuccessful on the previous OSSLT) was assigned to a small group (six to eight) for literacy support. Teachers interested in facilitating a group were released to meet with their group eight times before the OSSLT in March. The focus of the small group learning was on applying metacognition to literacy strategies across the curriculum. The staff found that personal interactions in small groups shed light on the achievement data (e.g., Grade 6 and 9 EQAO scores and credit accumulation in Grade 9) as well as attitudinal data for this cohort and engaged students in deeper thinking about what helps or prevents them from succeeding in literacy.

In January, more intensive support was offered to targeted groups of students based on the results of a mock OSSLT test. Each one was paired with a previously successful student who was able to act as a mentor. This peer support was one of the activities coordinated by a school club made up of students who want to improve the school's literacy skills. The immediate supports helped increase the confidence of the students and their ability to articulate their specific literacy strengths and needs.

- Frequent contact with individual students to discuss progress, increase agency in their literacy development and respond to changes in needs
- Collaboration with students and their parents to build an understanding of the investment required to meet the literacy graduation requirement
- Review of the ISR and the IIR, and a conference with each student who has not succeeded on the OSSLT to develop a plan for remediation (i.e., additional support for taking the test again or an opportunity to take the OSSLC)

EQAO Support Resources for Reading and Writing Skill Assessment and Instruction

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) provides sample materials for students and educators to deepen their understanding of specific literacy skills required for the test. Students can use the sample OSSLT booklets to become familiar with the format and types of reading passages and questions, the writing formats and types of writing prompts. They can practice responding to the sample questions. Students and educators can use the scoring codes to assess sample answers from EQAO or their own responses. Together, they can deconstruct answers to clarify what is meant by terms such as “vague” or “considerable” and to create success criteria for reading and writing tasks.

- Sample Test Materials – Question and Answer Booklets
<http://www.eqao.com/en/assessments/OSSLT/Pages/example-assessment-materials-2016.aspx#releasematerials>
- Item Specific Rubrics and Sample Student Responses with Annotations
[Item Specific Rubrics and Sample Student Responses with Annotations](#)

Sample Practice

When the results of a writing assessment in one school indicated that a group of students was having difficulty with the writing skill of developing a main idea with sufficient supporting details, Grade 10 teachers of applied classes learned new ways of teaching the skill. They had students create and present a main idea with supporting details, using infographics. Student understanding increased when they visually represented the skill. Next, in small groups, students examined EQAO OSSLT sample answers for this writing skill and ranked them from “excellent” to “poor.” They reviewed and discussed the EQAO scoring codes with their teacher and used descriptors from the scoring guide to help co-construct success criteria. The small groups offered suggestions for “bumping up” each sample answer. Students went on to apply the skill of developing a main idea with supporting details in their class work.