MULTILINGUAL LITERACY SIFE SCREENER

User Manual

NYSED.gov

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1. Introduction to the MLS

The MLS is a multilingual test tool used to inform teachers and administrators of the home-language literacy skills their students bring with them when they begin schooling in New York State. The MLS was created by an expert team of educators, linguists, and researchers from the Second Language Acquisition Lab and The Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society (RISLUS) at The City University of New York Graduate Center in collaboration with the New York State Education Department.

The MLS is a semi-adaptive online test tool that reflects current literature-based curricula and didactic principles from students' home countries for grades three through nine. The MLS has three components: Early Literacy, Reading Comprehension, and Vocabulary. The Early Literacy module, which is an optional module, asks students to identify same and different sounds, syllables, and sound-to-symbol correspondences. Beyond the word level, it examines basic sentence comprehension. The Reading Comprehension module asks students to read passages of various types: literary, informational, functional, and persuasive, and answer both Initial Understanding and Interpretation questions. The text types used differ by language. This module is available in the following languages: Arabic, Bangla, Chinese Simplified, English, Haitian Creole, Maay Maay, S'gaw Karen, Spanish and Urdu. The Vocabulary section, which is also an optional module, tests synonyms and students' knowledge of words in context. The vocabulary module is available in Chinese, English, Spanish and Urdu. In some languages the MLS Vocabulary section also includes compound words and multiple meaning words. In other languages, vocabulary is embedded in the Reading Comprehension section. (Please see page 13-16 for information on the vocabulary module.)

Age and culturally appropriate reading passages are authentic, original texts written by native speaker educational experts. Passages were created to avoid region-specific vocabulary. Text types and topics were selected according to popular home language literary traditions and genres familiar to newcomer students. Question types differ by language to match home-country testing conventions.

The dynamic MLS Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension modules begin with a practice section. Following this, scored questions begin at the advanced third-grade level. The subsequent MLS passages and questions increase in grade and difficulty if they are answered correctly and decrease in grade and difficulty if they are answered incorrectly. The MLS Early Literacy sections begin with a practice session and a student sees every question in each section of the test tool.

The MLS's Literacy Skills and Abilities Teacher Report is a detailed description of a student's skills and abilities in reading, vocabulary, and early literacy. The report also identifies grade-level (grades 3 through 9) according to literacy skills and abilities standards of the home country.

2. Population and Purpose

Newcomer English Language Learners (ELLs) in New York State are usually placed in a Bilingual Education program or in an English as a New Language (ENL) instructional program that draw on students' home language and content knowledge while building language and academic skills in English. These program models require a foundation in home-language literacy skills. Educators are able to facilitate learning in both the home language and in English by tapping into students' prior knowledge and existing home-language literacy skills.

Many immigrant students come from areas where access to education is limited due to war, political unrest, cultural customs, and other factors. This group is known as Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education (SIFE). SIFE are characterized as reading two grades below their grade level in their home language. The MLS is a test tool to be used in conjunction with The SIFE Oral Interview Questionnaire and The Writing Screener, to determine if a newly arrived English Language Learner should be designated as SIFE).

3. Before MLS Administration

3a. Potential SIFE

If an identified ELL is potentially SIFE (as determined by the Home Language Questionnaire, the Individual Interview and the NYSITELL), the MLS should be administered to determine the student's home language literacy skills. Because of the MLS's format, it is important to determine whether the student has adequate keyboard skills to take the MLS (e.g. clicking and scrolling). Some newcomer students may come from refugee camps or have had limited access to digital technologies (e.g. smart phones, computers, internet access). The qualified personnel will first need to assess if an online exam is appropriate for the student, or if the student will require some computer skills training prior to starting the exam. The Proctor should observe the student to ensure that the student understand how to use a computer.

3b. Choosing MLS Language

Before administering the MLS, the qualified personnel that will be administering the exam should review the Home Language Questionnaire as well as the Individual Interview Screening, and the language of prior schooling of the student.

3.C Facilities Requirements

Please ensure that students are in a quiet room with no distractions to complete the test. It may be helpful to place a "Testing in Progress: Do Not Disturb" sign on the door of the testing room. This is an untimed test, so please, give students as much time as they need to complete the test. Although the

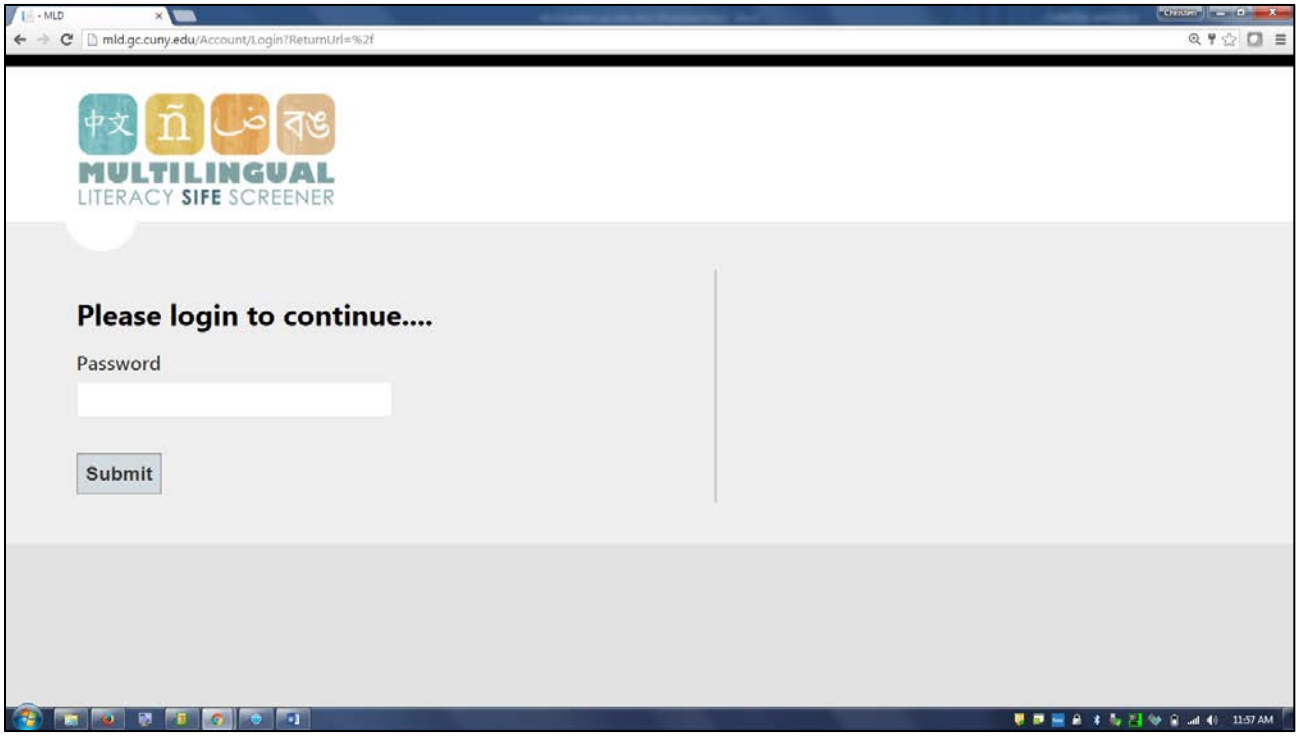
test is untimed, the MLS may take up to 50 minutes, depending on the student's home language proficiency. Students may take longer than one hour or take a break during the test.

3d. Technology Requirements

The MLS is administered online using a computer with audio capabilities and with reliable and consistent internet access. The MLS is designed to work with **Firefox or Chrome** internet browsers. **Do NOT use MICROSOFT INTERNET EXPLORER or SAFARI**. Instructions for the exam are given verbally, so ensure that there are headphones available for each student and that students can control the volume on their computer. If there is an interruption, such as a fire alarm, students may leave the MLS open on the browser and return to the test later. The data will not save unless the test is completed, so do not close the browser on the MLS until you have confirmation that the data has been sent to the server. Students must not hit refresh or use the back button on the browser during the test, which will result in the loss of the student's completed work.

4. General Login

To begin using the MLS, open the **Firefox or Chrome** internet browser. **Do NOT use MICROSOFT INTERNET EXPLORER or SAFARI**. Type MLS.gc.cuny.edu into the address bar of your browser. You will see the screen below which prompts you for a password to login. In the field under *Password* enter the master password mlsnysed, and then click the ***Submit*** button. There is no "forgot password" link on this page.



5. Homepage

Once you have logged in, the next screen is the homepage (shown below). From the homepage you can click on the following links (in bold):

- ***Apply for an account***: Click this link the first time the MLS will be administered at your school site to create credentials. Each school site only has one set of credentials, namely:
  - *A login and password to administer a* test. These are created by qualified personnel that will administer the test (or an administrator)
  - *A login* to view and print test result reports. This will be sent to you by the MLS support team
  - *A password for the results login,* which you create yourself.

- *It is important to apply for an account PRIOR to administering the tests.* ***It is recommended that you apply for an account three days before the first time you plan to administer a test. Please see section 6 below on Applying for an Account***

Once you have credentials, enter the MLS website again with the master password **mlsnysed, and** then do the following:

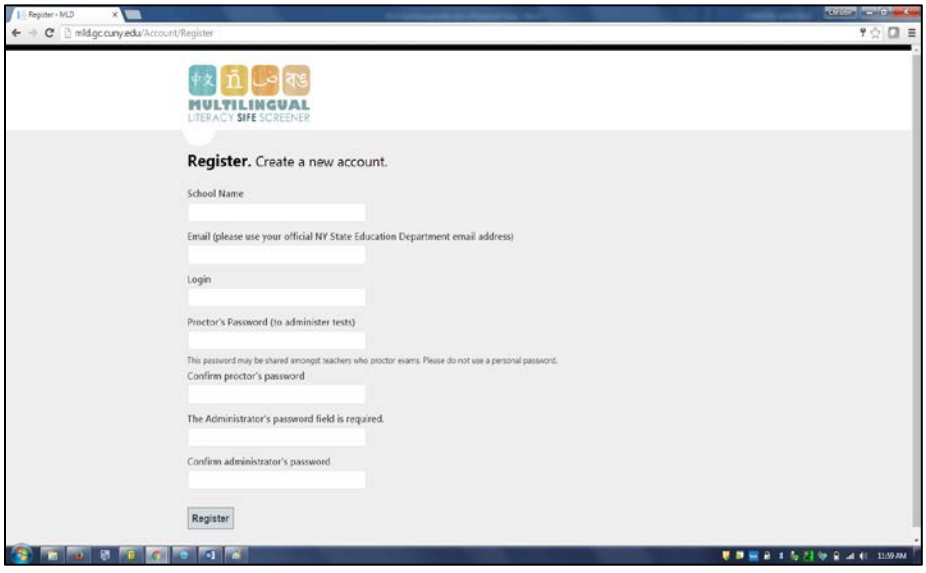
If you want to administer a SIFE identification test, select ***Reading Comprehension.***
If you want to administer an additional optional vocabulary test, select ***Vocabulary***
If you want to administer an additional optional early literacy test, select ***Early Literacy***
If you want to check your student's results, select ***Reports***.

6. Applying for an Account

To apply for an account and obtain credentials, click ***Apply for an Account*** at the bottom of the screen. After clicking on the link, you will see the *Registration* screen below. In order to register for an account and obtain credentials, fill in the following fields. Remember, you will be applying for the Proctor and the Administrator passwords.

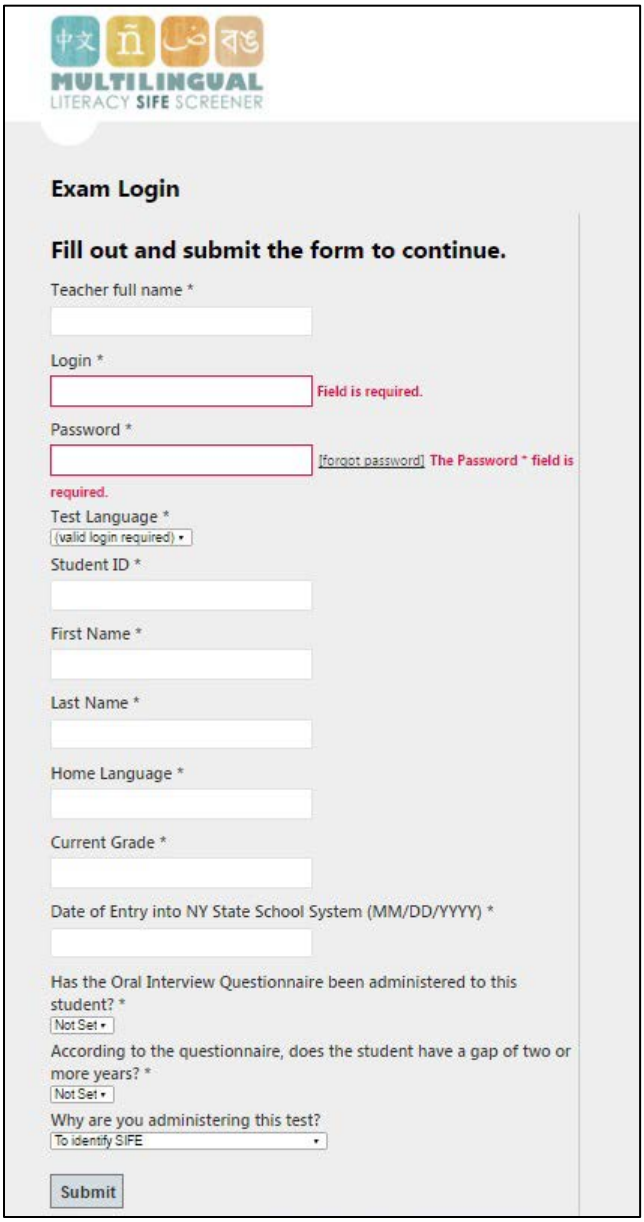
- ***School name*:** Enter the name of your school (e.g. P.S. 000 – The Barack H. Obama School for Government Studies).
- ***Email*:** Enter the official work or school email address that the school site MLS Administrator will use. Please use your official NY State email address. Credentials will be emailed to this address after submitting the registration form (Please, apply for an account three days before you plan to administer a test).
- ***Login*:** Enter your school's BEDS code. This will be the username for MLS test administration.
- *Proctor's Password*: Create and enter a password for MLS Proctors. Keep this in a safe location.
- ***Confirm Proctor's Password*:** Re-enter the password for MLS Proctors. Make sure that it is the same as the above field.
- **Create password for MLS administrator(s):** they will be able to view the literacy skills assessment reports. Keep this password in a safe location.
- ***Confirm Administrator's password*:** Re-enter the password for MLS Administrators. Make sure that it is the same as the above field.

After filling in all the fields with the appropriate information, click the ***Register*** button. Your registration request will be approved by the MLS Web Administrator within three (3) business days. You will receive an email confirming the school site BEDS code (your MLS Proctor username), and the MLS Administrator's username. Make sure you keep track of your passwords. There will only be one set of credentials per school.



7. Reading Comprehension Test or Optional Vocabulary/Early Literacy Tests

7.A Test Login



To administer the Reading Comprehension (or optional Vocabulary or Early Literacy) MLS, click on the ***Reading Comprehension*** **(**or ***Vocabulary or Early Literacy*****)** link on the homepage. After clicking on the link you will see the *Exam Login* page which is the same for the Early Literacy test, the Reading Comprehension test, and the Vocabulary test. You will need your school's login credentials in order to administer the test. In order to begin administering the test, you will first need to fill-out the *Exam Login* form with the school and student's information. If you do not have all of the student's information at hand, you may modify it later by clicking on their ID number in the Reports Section. All fields are required in order to submit the form and begin the test. Fill in the following fields:

- ***Teacher full name:*** Enter the Proctor's first and last name.
- ***Login:*** Enter your school's BEDS number.
- ***Password:*** Enter the test Proctor password you created. This is not the administrator password used for viewing reports. If you cannot remember the password for Proctor password, click on the *Forgot Password* link. You will be redirected to a different page where you can get directions on how to reset your password.
- ***Test Language:*** Select the language in wish you want to administer the test. You will only be able to select the language after entering a valid Proctor username and password.
- ***Student ID:*** Have the student enter their NY State student ID number.
- ***First Name:*** Have the student enter their own First Name(s) as listed on official school records. Note that students may have more than one first name (e.g. Maria Elena, Mary Sue). Be sure to enter all of the legal names of the student.

- ***Last Name:*** Have the student enter their own Last Name(s) as listed on official school records. Note that students may have more than one last name (e.g. Serrano Garcia, Barrera Tobón). Be sure to enter all of the legal names of the student.
- ***Home Language:*** Enter the home language of the student. This should be the same language in which the exam is being administered. If the student has more than one home language, enter each home language separated by commas and a space. You can report the home language(s) exactly as indicated by the student. Often the same language will be named differently depending on the community and, conversely, different languages will be named the same.
- ***Current Grade:*** Enter the grade in which the student is currently enrolled.
- ***Date of Entry into NY State School System (MM/DD/YYYY):*** Enter the student's date of entry into the NY State School System. Enter the two digit month, backslash, two digit day, backslash, and four digit year (e.g. June 24, 2015 is entered as 06/24/2015).
- ***Has the Oral Interview Questionnaire been administered to this student?*** Select **TRUE** or **FALSE** from the dropdown menu. The MLS should only be administered for students after the NY State SIFE Oral Interview Questionnaire has been administered by a teacher.
- ***According to the questionnaire, does the student have a gap of two or more years?*** Select **TRUE** or **FALSE** from the dropdown menu.
- ***Why are you administering this test?*** Select **To identify SIFE.**

Option	Clarification
Identify SIFE	To identify whether a student is SIFE (Student with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education) in conjunction with the NY State SIFE Oral Interview Questionnaire and screeners.

7.B Test Administration

If you are using Chrome, a "Translate this page?" box may come up. Make sure that students do NOT use the Translate option by clicking "NOPE."

Students must not hit refresh or use the back button of the browser during the course of the test. Doing so will result in a loss of their work and being taken back to the beginning of the test.

After clicking the ***Submit*** button on the *Exam Login* page, the test will begin. Ensure that the student is ready and has headphones on. For more information about the content of the test, the types of questions in each test, and the format, please see the reading comprehension, vocabulary, and early literacy sections (VIII.B.1, VIII.B.2, and VIII.B.3) below.

Please ensure that students are reading everything and answering thoughtfully, not just clicking answers randomly. Answers may not be discussed among students. Additionally, in order to get an

understanding of students' literacy skills and abilities, it is important that the student does not get assistance from fellow students, teachers, parents, and/or administrators. Students may receive assistance and ask for help during the practice questions, but once the scored questions begin, it is crucial that the student complete the answers by themselves. **When students randomly guess or cheat, their MLS results will be useless.**

7.B.1 Reading Comprehension

After clicking the ***Submit*** button on the *Exam Login* page, the Reading Comprehension test will begin.

7.B.1.1 Unscored Practice Portion of the MLS

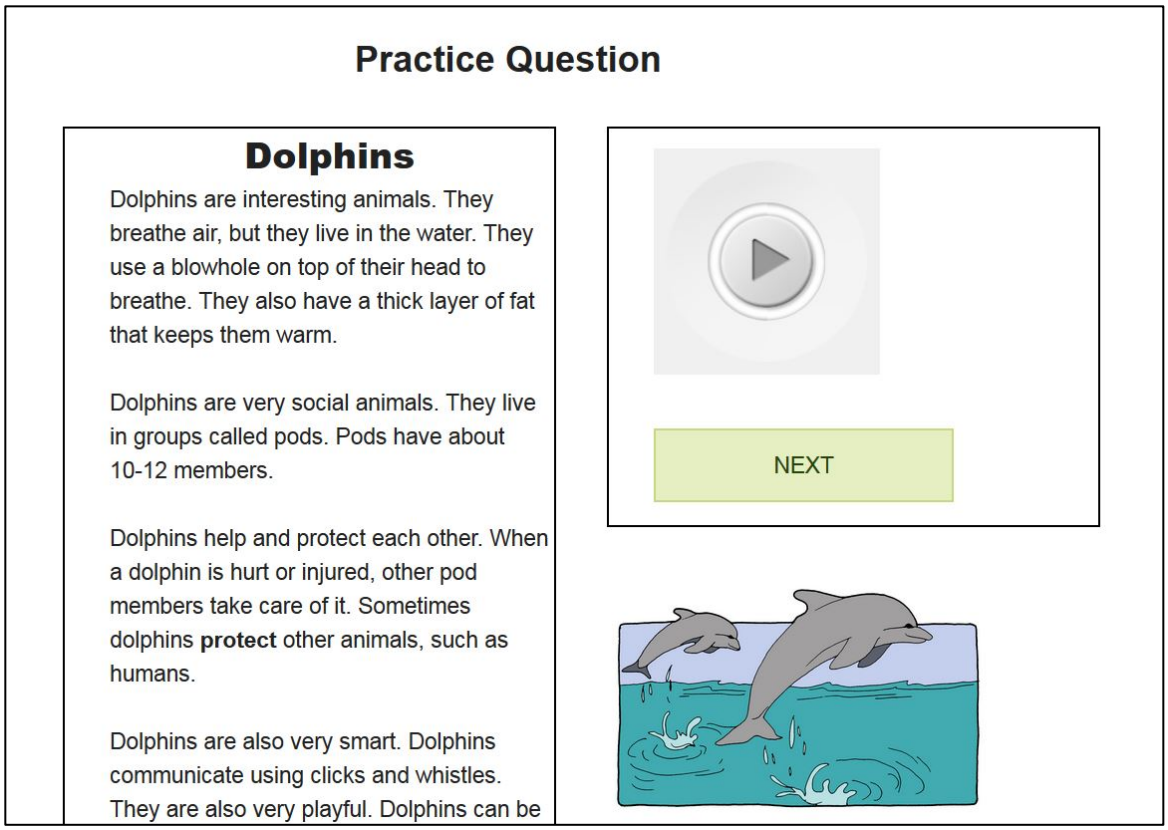
The test will begin immediately upon clicking the *Submit* button on the *Exam Login* page. The student should be comfortably seated at the computer with the headphones already on, as audio will begin playing immediately upon clicking the *Submit* button on the *Exam Login* page.

The Reading Comprehension test will first begin with unscored practice questions to familiarize the student with the format of the MLS. You may help students answer these questions, as any question that has "Practice" displayed on the top of the page is an unscored item.

The student will see the MLS logo under the title of the exam "Reading Comprehension" in the language of the exam and in English (i.e. Arabic: "القراءة والفهم" Bangla: " পাঠ অনুধাবন পরীক্ষা ", English: "Reading Comprehension", Haitian Creole: "Egzèsis Lekti", Maay-Maay: "Fahamka Aqriyowka", Mandarin Chinese: "阅读理解", Sgaw Karen: "တၢ်သ့ဖးအတၢ်သ့ဉ်ညါနှၤ်ပၢၢ်", Spanish: "Comprensión de lectura", Urdu: "پڑھنا اور سمجھنا"). While the logo is displayed, a qualified personnel who speaks the student's home language informs the student in their home language that they will be doing some reading activities (i.e. reading some stories, articles, and other texts) and answering questions in the language of the exam. The student is informed in their home language that there is only one correct answer for each question and to answer the question carefully.

The test will automatically advance to displaying a text about dolphins. The Reading Comprehension test begins with the same passage about dolphins and two practice questions. The students will hear the passage read in the language of the exam and see the same text written on the left hand side of the screen. After the passage is read, a question will display on the right-hand side of the screen. For the practice questions only, the student will hear the question and all the answers read aloud. In order to advance to the next practice question, the student must listen to the voice that will give the correct answer and select that answer.

Students may pause the audio, listen to the instructions or practice the reading passage and questions by clicking the green play button.

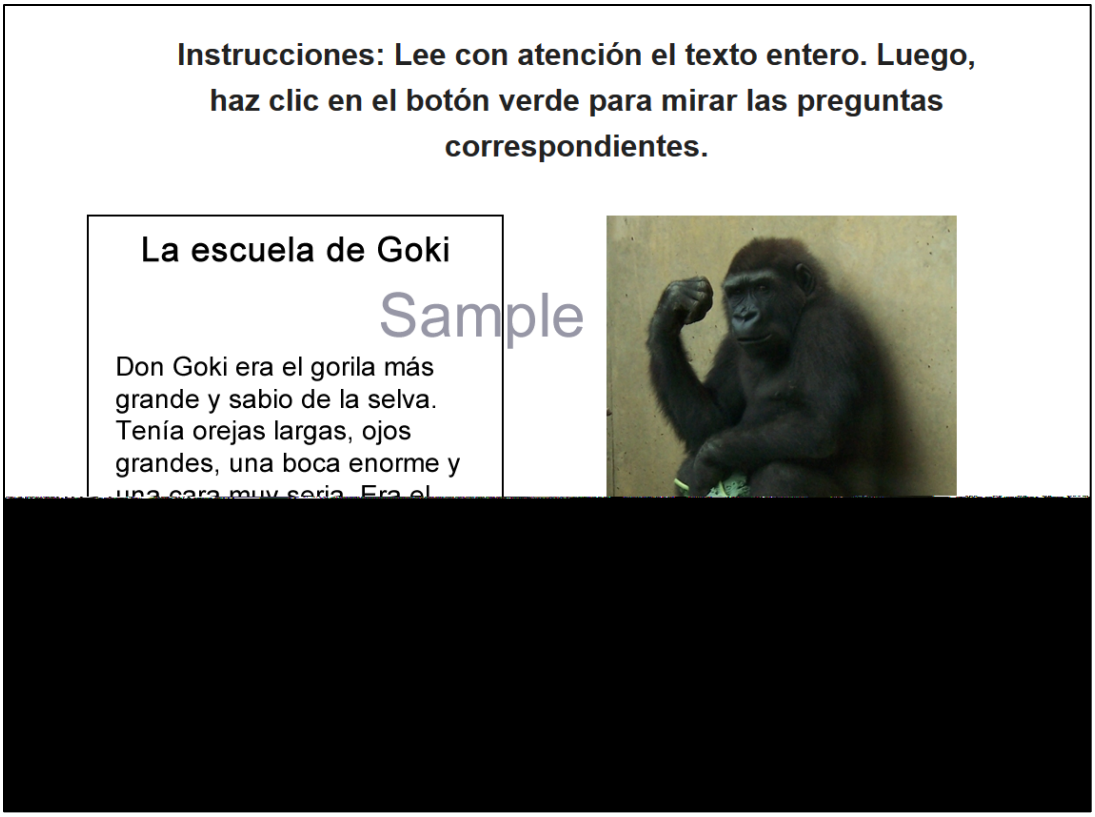


After finishing both practice questions, the scored portion of the Reading Comprehension section will begin.

7.B.1.2 Scored Portion of the MLS

Students should complete the Reading Comprehension section on their own by reading the passages and answering the questions that follow. On the top of the page, instructions in the language of the exam direct the student to read the passage in its entirety. After the practice questions are completed, the reading passages will NOT be read aloud to the student.

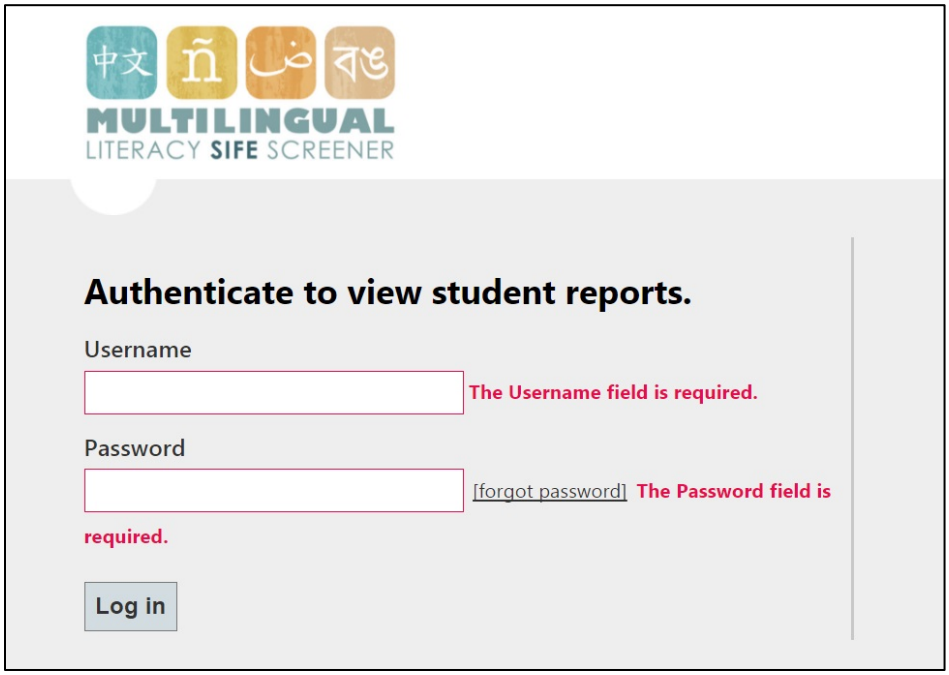
Please note that the students may have to scroll down to read the complete passage. See below for an example text from Spanish.



…Continue scrolling…

MLS Literacy Skills and Abilities Reports. In order to view the student's report, you will need to login by filling in the form. Fill in the following fields and click ***Log in***:

- *Username*: Enter your school's administrator credentials, which you received in an email after registering for credentials. This is different from your school site Proctor username.
- *Password*: Enter the administrator's password. If you cannot remember, click on the ***Forgot Password*** link. You will be taken to a different page where you can get directions on how to reset your password.

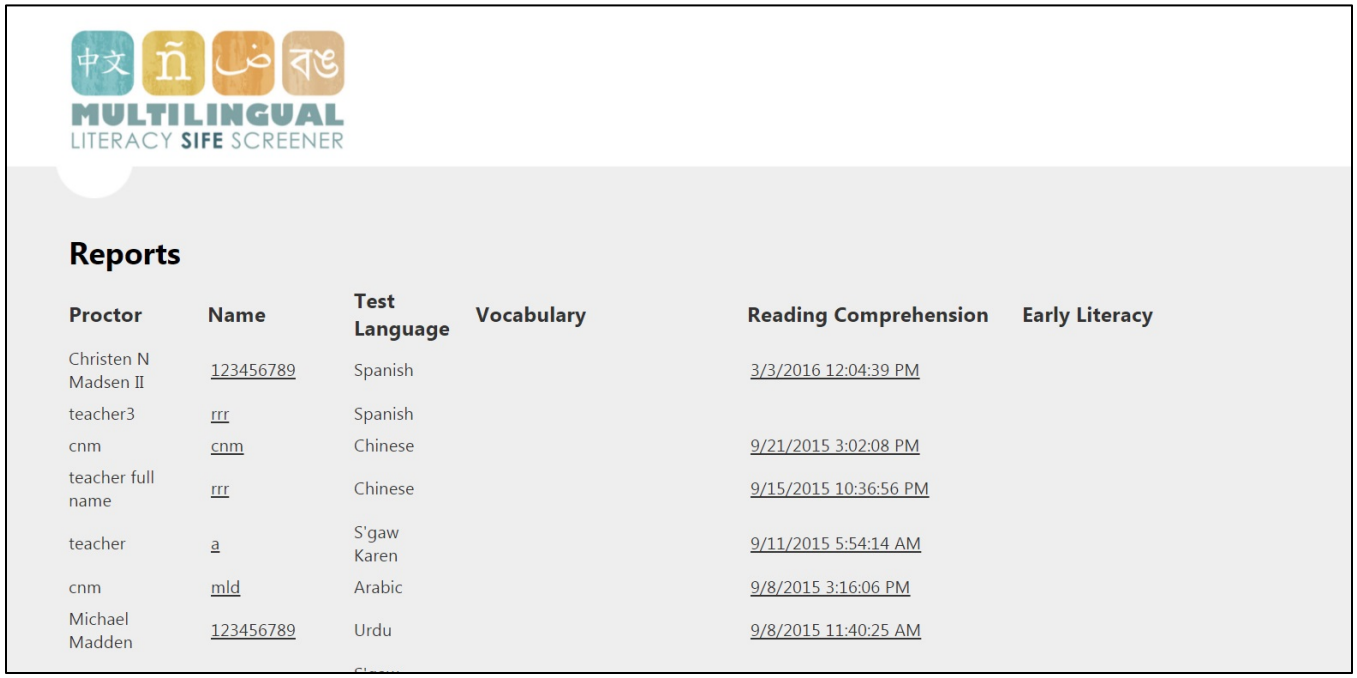


After clicking ***Log in*** on the Reports Log in page, you will see the *Reports* page below. There are five columns.

- ***Proctor*****:** Full name of the Proctor as entered when initiating the exam. This cannot be edited (To edit a report see page 23).
- ***Name*****:** Name and NY State Student ID number. This can be edited by clicking on the NY State Student ID, which links to the *Edit Student Information* page.
- ***Test Language*****:** Language in which the MLS was administered.
- ***Early Literacy*****:** Date and time the Early Literacy MLS test was completed by the student. Click on the Date/Time to view and print the student's Reading Comprehension Literacy Skills and Abilities Report.
- ***Vocabulary*****:** Date and time the Vocabulary MLS test was completed by the student. Click on the Date/Time to view and print the student's Vocabulary Literacy Skills and Abilities Report.

- ***Reading Comprehension*:** Date and time the Reading Comprehension MLS test was completed by the student. Click on the Date/Time to view and print the student's Reading Comprehension Literacy Skills and Abilities Report.

To view reports for a specific student, click on the appropriate date in the Early Literacy, Vocabulary, or Reading Comprehension column for that student. This page will display all students and exams administered at your school site using the same Proctor username. You are able to view the Literacy Skills and Abilities Report as often as needed. **Remember to print out a paper copy of the MLS Literacy Skills and Abilities Report for the student's records.**



8.B Content of Reports

The Literacy Skills and Abilities Reports for the Early Literacy, Vocabulary, and Reading Comprehension tests display the student's NY State Student ID number and the grade level in the home language.

Reading Comprehension:

The MLS assesses and reports results for two modes of comprehension: Initial Understanding and Interpretation. Initial understanding items measure students' ability to understand information that is explicitly stated or explained in the text. Interpretation items measure students' ability to understand implicit information and interact meaningfully with the text, e.g. to think critically, make inferences and predictions, and apply reading strategies such as using text features. Additionally, the MLS Reading Comprehension Literacy Skills and Abilities Reports break down the home country and New York State

Common Core Standards (NYCCS) literacy skills that the student has, in keeping with the grade level in which the student is placed.

An example of an advanced ninth grade reading comprehension report appears below:

> This student is able to read at an **Advanced 9th Grade** level in their home language, Chinese (Simplified).
>
> Advanced ninth grade reading incorporates two main types of reading material: **first-person** essay reading in terms of the structure and language used; **literary** passages related to historical stories, first-person narratives, and poetry.
>
> Advanced ninth grade readers demonstrate an ability to identify information that is explicitly and implicitly stated in the text. They are able to identify and generalize the main idea in several text types. Moreover, they can determine and summarize the author's purpose and point of view in expository writing.
>
> In literature, advanced ninth grade readers demonstrate an ability to interpret metaphorical language in poetry, analyzing how the author uses figurative or evocative language. Students at this level are able to identify multiple interpretations of a poem and extrapolate meaning from advanced literary devices such as personification.
>
> The MLS Reading Comprehension section evaluates home language literacy skills for English Language Learners. In an effort to create a more culturally and linguistically appropriate evaluation for Chinese-speaking newcomers, the Chinese MLS was designed to reflect current literature-based curricula and didactic principles from students' home countries. Text types and topics were selected according to popular Chinese literary traditions and genres that Chinese-speaking newcomers would have previously been exposed to in their home classrooms. These types include legends, myths, and testimonial literature such as biography and autobiography. Grade-level texts were then written using authentic language relative to the topic. It is important to note that the MLS marks a clear distinction between early and late grade levels to reflect students' academic progress within the school year.
>
> Students begin the evaluation by reading third grade-level passages. Each reading selection is followed by multiple test items in order to assess two modes of comprehension: Initial Understanding and Interpretation. Initial understanding items measure students' ability to understand information that is explicitly stated or explained in the text. Interpretation items measure students' ability to understand implicit information and interact meaningfully with the text, e.g. to

> think critically, make inferences and predictions, and apply reading strategies such as using text features. Test items are designed to measure literacy skills researched to be in line with both home country and New York State Common Core Standards.
>
> The following information shows the student's performance on the leveled texts, broken down by grade. The minimum passing grade is 70%.

Vocabulary:

Vocabulary Literacy Skills and Abilities Reports inform the reader that the MLS Vocabulary exam words chosen for the exam were culled from grade-appropriate reading material as well as lists of words frequently found on standardized tests in the students' home countries. Additionally, the vocabulary section tests a variety of important sub-skills of home language vocabulary knowledge; ability to glean meaning from context, synonym knowledge, and the ability to recognize compound words (the latter for fourth grade and below only). Each section is interpreted and discussed along with a representation of student performance in the form of a bar graph. The bar graph displays the percentage of correct answers only for the grade in which the student was placed. The bar graphs do not report results for the different grade-levels tests (e.g. if a student is placed in grade 5, the results do not include percent correct on grade 4 or grade 3 questions, as those skills and abilities are subsumed by grade 5).

An example of an advanced ninth grade vocabulary report appears below:

> This student has a 9th grade level of vocabulary in their home language, Chinese.
>
> The MLS Vocabulary section evaluates Chinese-language literacy skills for English Language Learners. The words chosen for the vocabulary section were culled from grade-appropriate reading material as well as lists of words frequently found on standardized tests in the students' home countries.
>
> The vocabulary section tests a variety of important sub-skills of Chinese vocabulary knowledge.
>
> Please note that the bar graphs display the student's performance on the questions presented in the grade they finished at.
>
> Context Clues
>
> This section of the assessment tests a student's ability to glean meaning from context. This skill is very important for reading comprehension as it allows students to try and guess at what a previously unseen vocabulary word might mean. The words chosen for this section are more difficult than the synonyms and were put into a

context designed to be accessible to newcomer students. They were decided to be more difficult based on word-frequency and the accessibility of the concept they are describing.

Success in the Context Clue section indicates a student has the ability to derive word meaning from context.

Synonyms

This section tells us whether or not a student knows a particular grade-level word. It tests vocabulary breadth as well as a student's ability to discern shades of meaning. Passing this section indicates that a student has a wide vocabulary appropriate for a particular grade or above. However, please note that *scoring poorly on this section does not necessarily indicate a below-grade level vocabulary!* Out of the hundreds of words potentially acquired in a certain grade, only ten were chosen. Passing this section indicates a large vocabulary, but failing it does not indicate a deficient one, especially if a student scores well on other vocabulary or reading tasks.

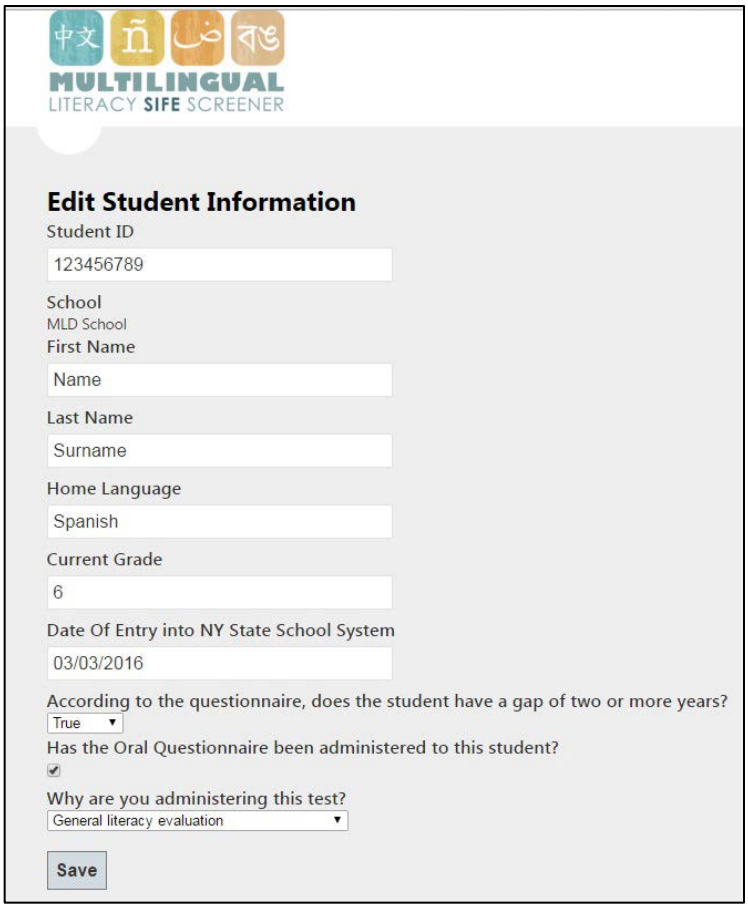
Success in the Synonyms section indicates the student has a large vocabulary.

8.C Editing a Student's Biographical Information

To edit a student's biographical information, click on their New York State Student ID in the second column from the left named *Name* while in the *Reports* page. After clicking on the student ID, you will see the Edit Student Information page. You may edit any of the fields. Submit changes by clicking *Save.* You can edit any of the fields below by selecting existing text and entering new text.

- ***Student ID****:* Change or enter the student's New York State student ID number.
- ***School:*** This is the school site that the MLS was administered in. You cannot change this field.
- ***First Name:*** Change or enter the student's First Name(s) as listed on official school records. Note that students may have more than one first name (e.g. Maria Elena, Mary Sue). Be sure to enter all of the legal names of the student.
- ***Last Name:*** Change or enter the student's Last Name(s) as listed on official school records. Note that students may have more than one last name (e.g. Serrano Garcia, Barrera Tobón). Be sure to enter all of the legal names of the student.
- ***Home Language:*** Change or enter the home language of the student. This should be the same as the language the exam is being administered in. If the student has more than one home language, enter each home language separated by commas and a space. You can report the home language(s) exactly as is indicated by the student. Often the same language will have different names depending on the community; conversely, different languages will be named the same.

- ***Current Grade:*** Change or enter the grade that the student is currently enrolled in.
- ***Date of Entry into New York State School System (MM/DD/YYYY):*** Change or enter the student's date of entry into New York State School System. Enter the two-digit month, backslash, two-digit day, backslash, and four digit year (e.g. June 24, 2015 is entered as 06/24/2015).
- ***According to the questionnaire, does the student have a gap of two or more years?*** Change or select **TRUE** or **FALSE** from the dropdown menu. The MLS is intended to be used as a test tool and teacher support for SIFE, which are typically students with a gap of two or more years in their formal education.



- ***Has the Oral Interview Questionnaire been administered to this student?*** Check or uncheck the box to indicate whether the NY State SIFE Oral Interview Questionnaire has been administered by a teacher. The MLS should only be administered for students after the New York State SIFE Oral Interview Questionnaire has been administered by a teacher.

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