



MEASURING STUDENT LEARNING IN 2021: What will be Different in Maryland?

Since COVID-19 first led to sudden school closures in 2020, families have stepped up in unprecedented ways to support learning at home as students began learning remotely. Teachers and leaders have worked hard to put plans in place to ensure students are safe, offering students across Maryland different learning models—remote, hybrid and in-person, with some school districts transitioning between them as circumstances demanded. But the unprecedented changes in learning have impacted students in many ways, from their relationships with peers and social emotional growth to academics.

This year, it is more important than ever to measure student learning to understand the impact that COVID-19 and different learning models have had on students. This is especially important for families, who need objective information about how well their child learned grade-level skills so they can better support learning at home. While state tests are only one of many ways to measure student learning, families, schools and leaders need the objective and actionable information the state test provides to identify any learning gaps to best support students and fully recover from the pandemic.

How will State Tests be Different in 2021?

Knowing that the pandemic has affected students, teachers and schools, MCAP will be different than it has been in the past. As of March 2021, the following changes have been made:

- To reduce stress for teachers and students in an already challenging year, MCAP results will not be used to rate schools or districts as they have in the past.
- The tests will also be delayed until the fall to allow teachers additional time to cover content and for schools to more fully return to in-person instruction. Schools will also be able to test students in smaller groups with social distancing if necessary.
- High school students have the option of still taking end-of-course tests this spring, but the MCAP requirements are waived for students graduating this spring.
- Students will only take MCAP in math and English language arts, not in science or social studies.
- The tests will also be shorter, and only take half the time of past MCAPs, with math taking about an hour and 20 minutes, and English about approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes.
- Results will be available more quickly in the past, with some items being scored within 2 days of a student completing the test. This will allow for results to be shared with schools and families earlier than before.