



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

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 South Carolina 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. Although South Carolina students may not take the state tests this spring, families should talk with teachers before summer to discuss results from other measures that may be available and whether their child met the expectations of the grade level.

How will State Tests be Different in 2021?

Knowing that the pandemic has deeply affected students, teachers and schools, the South Carolina state tests will be different than in the past. South Carolina has asked the U.S. Department of Education to cancel the state tests for 2021. If this request is not approved, students will be required to take the tests. As of March 2021, the following changes have been made:

- **To reduce stress for teachers and students in an already challenging year, the results from the state tests will not be used to rate schools or districts as they have in the past.**
- **While students will be required to take the test in-person, districts may have plans to test students learning remotely separately from classmates learning in person. Schools may also use staggered schedules or test in areas outside the classroom, such as gyms or cafeterias, to allow for more social distance.**
- **Depending on the grade and subject, students may take the test earlier in the year, by about 10 days. This gives school more time to identify additional support that students may need and work with families to set up summer learning so students are ready for the next grade level.**