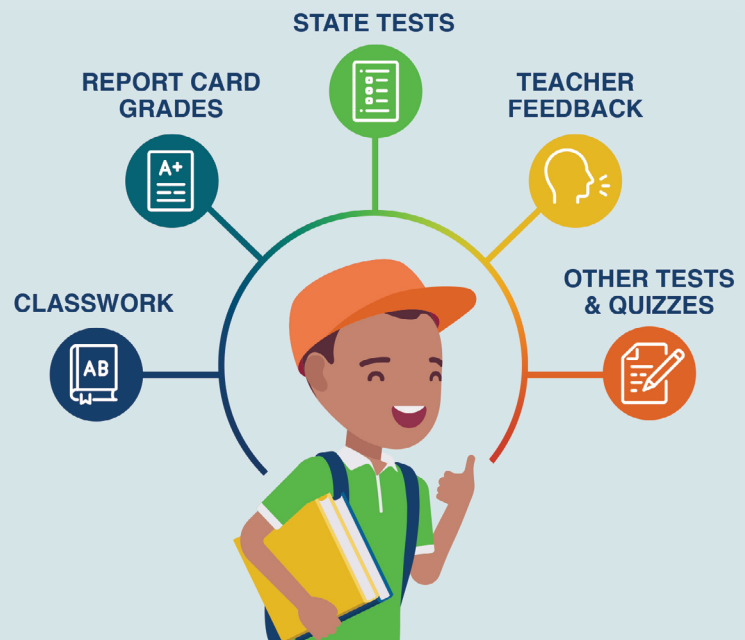




A FAMILY GUIDE TO ANNUAL STATE TESTS IN ALASKA: One of Many Measures of Student Learning

There are many ways to measure academic performance, and annual state tests are only one of them. These tests are not meant to tell the whole story. They are meant to be combined with other measures, including teacher feedback, classwork and projects, and report card grades. Together, these measures can give families a more complete picture of a student's performance so they can better support learning at home and advocate for their child.



State Assessments 101

The Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA requires students to take state tests in reading and math every year in third through eighth grade and once in high school. In Alaska, students in third through eighth grade take the Performance Evaluation for Alaska Schools (PEAKS) in English language arts and math. Fifth and eighth grade students also take PEAKS in science; ninth grade students take PEAKS in English language arts and Algebra; and 10th grade students take PEAKS in science.

A Focus on Grade Level Skills

Unlike other tests, the PEAKS test is focused on grade-level material and is aligned to state standards. The test questions match what students learn throughout the year. These grade-level skills are the most important for students to learn in order to move on to more challenging content.

The PEAKS test can be taken online or with paper and pencil. Each school district decides how students will take the test. The test includes a variety of different types of questions; traditional multiple-choice, questions such as plotting points on a graph or number line, and writing essays and analyzing text.

Grade 6: Math

Select boxes in the table to match equivalent expressions.

(Practice hint: Select a box in the table to make a checkmark appear. The checkmark indicates a match between that row and column of the table.)

	$x + 4$	$5x + 2$	$6x - 3$
$3x + 2(x + 1)$	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
$3 + (1 - x) + 2x$	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
$3(2x - 1)$	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

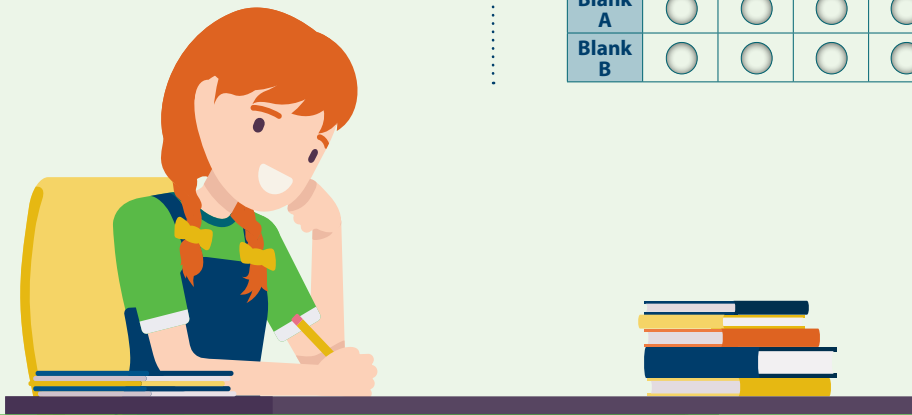
Grade 3: ELA

Read the sentences.

The passage states, "In time vast pieces of the glacier break off." As used here, the word "vast" means A. Later, the passage says, "Then they use computer programs to predict the most likely path for the icebergs." The word "predict" means almost the same as B.

Choose **one** word for each blank that **best** completes the sentences. Do **not** use a word more than once. Some words are **not** used.

	1. old	2. guess	3. move	4. huge	5. color	6. finish
Blank A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blank B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Useful Information for All

FAMILIES: Understanding Grade Level Performance

The PEAKS report gives families information on how well their child performed in different skill sets for each subject. Families can use this information to identify where their child is doing well and where they may need support or practice. This helps families better support learning at home, have meaningful conversations with teachers, set goals for each student's areas of improvement, and identify resources and strategies that can be used at home and in school to help students make progress.

Questions to Ask the Teacher about Your Child's PEAKS Report:

- What does this mean about my child's learning?
- Is my child on grade level?
- Where does my child need more support or improvement?
- What short-term learning goals should my child meet to show progress?
- How can I support learning at home?



TEACHERS: Informing Instruction

Students take different types of tests throughout the school year, including benchmark or diagnostic tests, such as MAP Growth, i-Ready or mCLASS. These are taken several times a year and measure mastery of important concepts and skills in reading and math. Students take a test at the beginning of the year to identify their “starting point” and again throughout the year to measure their progress. Benchmark tests help teachers identify and address learning gaps early on so students can stay on track to meet grade-level expectations. While the PEAKS test is only given at the end of the school year, it is one way of showing how much progress students made from the beginning of the year and how well they met grade-level expectations.

While teachers use PEAKS results to understand each student's unique needs and support them in the areas where they need extra help, they also help teachers to improve their instruction. Teachers can use the results to look for trends in their students' learning to see what skills or concepts students learned and what content they struggled with. This helps teachers identify what they taught effectively and where they need to improve or change their instructional strategies.

SCHOOL & DISTRICT LEADERS: Informing Decisions

PEAKS results are critical for school and district leaders to make informed decisions about schools and students. School and district-level PEAKS scores show leaders how students across a school or district are performing and indicate if a certain group of students or schools need more support. This allows school and district leaders to target additional support or resources to help those schools improve. District leaders also use PEAKS scores to understand what strategies and changes are working within the learning environment.



STATE LEADERS: Helping Schools Improve

State leaders use PEAKS results to identify schools and districts that need more support and resources. They identify the schools with the lowest performance in the state, as well as schools with certain groups of students that performed much lower on the test than the rest of the students in that school. These schools receive additional funding and resources from the state to support students and teachers. For example, schools may hire more teachers or tutors, or they may purchase additional instructional materials and programs, depending on the needs of their students.

Where Can I Go for More Information?

- For more information on the PEAKS test, visit the Parents and Communities section on Education.Alaska.gov/Assessments/Peaks
- To see answers to frequently asked questions, visit Education.Alaska.gov/TLS/Assessments/Peaks/FAQ_AlaskasAssessment.pdf
- For ideas on how to support your child's learning at home, visit PTA.org/FamilyGuides
- For more information about Alaska's PTA visit Sites.Google.com/AlaskaPTA.org/AlaskaPTA/Home

