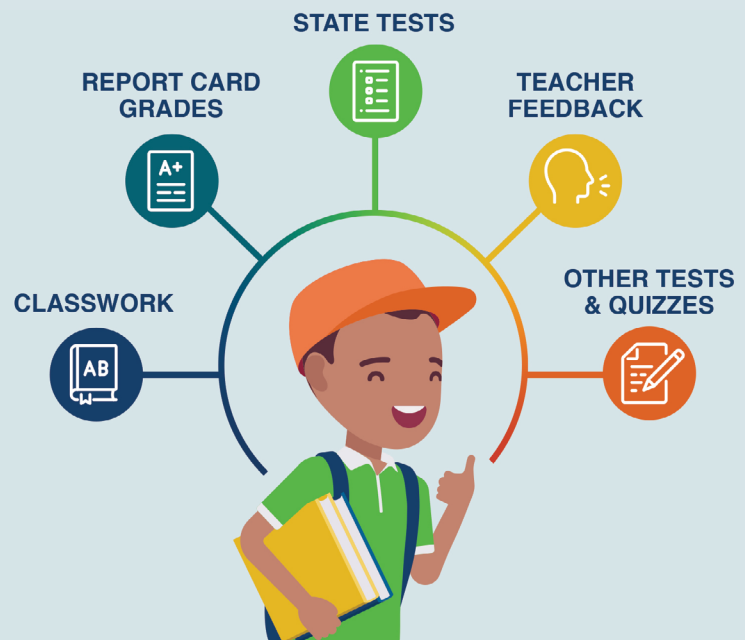




## A FAMILY GUIDE TO ANNUAL STATE TESTS IN ALABAMA: One of Many Measures of Student Learning

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 Alabama, students in third through eighth grade take the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) in reading and math. Students in grades four, six, and eight also take the test in science. In high school, students in 11th grade take the ACT.

A Focus on Grade Level Skills

Unlike other tests, the ACAP tests are focused on grade-level material and are aligned to the state standards. The test questions match what students do and learn in the classroom every day throughout the year, which are the skills that are most important for students to learn in order to move on to more challenging content.

The tests are taken online and are computer-adaptive, which means it adjusts the difficulty of the questions based on the student’s responses. The test includes a variety of different types of questions including multiple-choice and interactive questions that ask students to explain their answers and complete equations and graphs.

Grade 6: Math

Enter the missing value in the table of equivalent ratios.

(Practice Hint: Place the cursor in the answer box to enter your answer using the keyboard.)

x	y
5	8
10	16
15	<input type="text"/>
20	32
25	40

Grade 3: ELA

(Practice Hint: Move your answer into the chart. To change just one answer, move it out of the box, and then move a new answer into the box. To change all your answers, use the eraser button in the grey bar. This will clear all your answers.)

A student is researching and taking notes about George Washington, the first president of the United States. The student wants to organize the notes. Move each note into the chart under the correct heading.

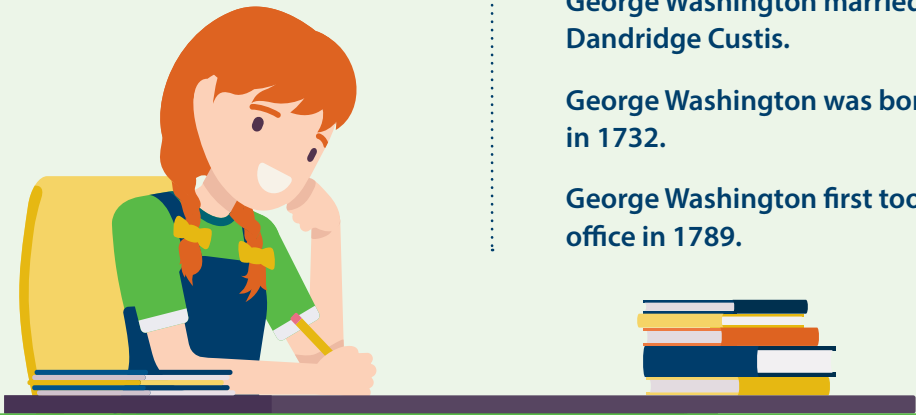
Washington’s Political Career	Washington’s Personal Life

George Washington was elected president twice.

George Washington married Martha Dandridge Custis.

George Washington was born in Virginia in 1732.

George Washington first took the oath of office in 1789.



## Useful Information for All

### **FAMILIES:** Understanding Grade Level Performance

The ACAP reports give families information on how well their child performed on different sets of skills in 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. It can also help them to start 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 ACAP 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. Some students take 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 ACAP tests are 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 ACAP 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

ACAP results are critical for school and district leaders to make informed decisions about schools and students. School and district level ACAP 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 them to target additional support or resources to help those schools improve. District leaders can also use the test scores to understand what strategies and changes are working.



### **STATE LEADERS:** Helping Schools Improve

State leaders use ACAP 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, visit [ALSDE.edu/SEC/SA/Pages/Home.aspx](https://alsde.edu/SEC/SA/Pages/Home.aspx)
- For ideas on how to support your child's learning at home, visit [PTA.org/FamilyGuides](https://PTA.org/FamilyGuides)
- For more information about Alabama's PTA visit [AlabamaPTA.org/](https://AlabamaPTA.org/)

