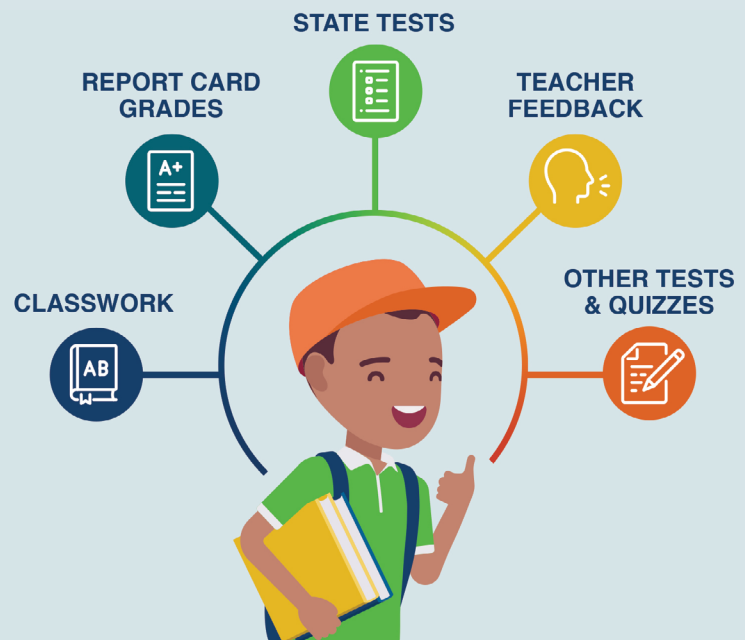




A FAMILY GUIDE TO ANNUAL STATE TESTS IN FLORIDA: One of Many Measures of Student Learning

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 Florida, students in third through 10th grade take the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) in English language arts and math. Starting in fourth grade, there is a writing section on the test. Students in fifth and eighth grade also take the FSA in science. High school students take FSA tests in Algebra 1, Geometry, Biology 1, Civics and U.S. History.

To earn a diploma, students must earn at least a Level 3 on both the 10th grade English language arts and the Algebra 1 FSA. Students can retake the test until they pass, but there are other options for students to demonstrate they have learned the material. For example, a student can show they've mastered the subject requirement by earning a comparable score on the SAT or ACT.

Studies show that third grade is a critical year for students to learn fundamental reading skills that will help them understand and think critically. As a result, Florida requires all third grade students to earn a score of a Level 2 or higher on the English language arts FSA to move onto fourth grade. There are other options for students to demonstrate grade level reading for promotion and if a student does not achieve a Level 2, the school, teachers and families will work together to determine how to best support the student.

A Focus on Grade Level Skills

Unlike other tests, the FSA is focused on grade level material and is 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 FSA is taken online or with paper and pencil, depending on the grade level. Students in third through sixth grade take all tests with paper and pencil, including English language arts, science, and math. Students in seventh through 10th grade take the tests online in all subjects.

The FSA includes a variety of different types of questions including traditional multiple choice, open ended responses, and questions that ask students to support their answer with evidence.

Grade 6: Math

Fill in the bubbles to select the value or values of x that make each equation or inequality true.

	$x = 1$	$x = 2$	$x = 3$
$2x + 5 = 9$	(A)	(B)	(C)
$2x + 5 < 9$	(D)	(E)	(F)
$4x - 5 = 7$	(G)	(H)	(I)

Grade 3: ELA

Fill in **one** bubble in each row to show the order of steps ants take to leave their homes during a flood in passage 1.

	First	Next	Finally
They build a new nest.	(A)	(B)	(C)
They move food and each other.	(D)	(E)	(F)
They stick their bodies together.	(G)	(H)	(I)



Useful Information for All

FAMILIES: Understanding Grade Level Performance

The FSA report gives 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 FSA 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 or i-Ready. 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 FSA 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 FSA results to understand each student's unique needs and support them in the areas where they need extra help, the results also help teachers to improve their instruction. They 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

FSA results are critical for school and district leaders to make informed decisions about schools and students. School and district-level test 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 test scores to understand what strategies and changes are working.



STATE LEADERS: Helping Schools Improve

State leaders use FSA 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 student groups 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 FSAssessments.org/Users/Students-And-Families.shtml
- To see a practice test, visit FSAssessments.org/Students-And-Families/Practice-Tests/Index.shtml
- For ideas on how to support your child's learning at home, visit PTA.org/FamilyGuides
- For more information about the Florida PTA visit FloridaPTA.org/

