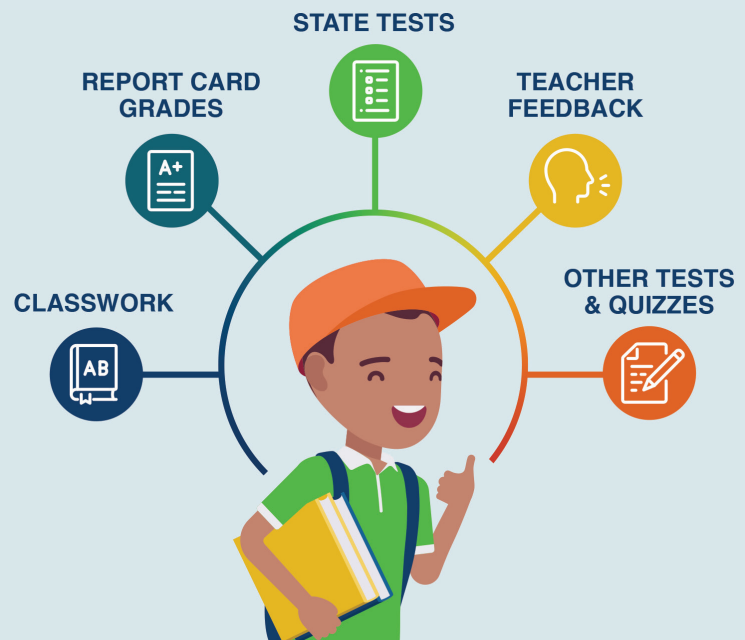




A FAMILY GUIDE TO ANNUAL STATE TESTS IN NEW MEXICO: One of Many Measures of Student Learning

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 New Mexico, students in third through eighth grade take the New Mexico Measures of Student Success and Achievement (NM-MSSA) in English language arts and math. Students in fifth, eighth and 11th grade also take a science test known as the New Mexico Assessment of Science Readiness (NM-ASR).

High school students take the SAT in 11th grade. To earn a diploma, students must show they have mastered the content in math, science, social studies and English by choosing from several different options. Receiving a minimum score on the SAT is one of those options. Other tests that can be used include end-of-course tests, the PSAT, Advanced Placement tests and ACT, among others.

A Focus on Grade Level Skills

Unlike other tests, NM-MSSA 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 NM-MSSA tests are taken online. They include a variety of questions, including traditional multiple choice and open-ended questions that ask students to show their work and explain their answers.

Grade 6: Math

This question has three parts. *Be sure to answer all parts of the question.*

The length of a rectangle is 4 units more than 3 times its width.

Write an equation in terms of the width, w , that represents the perimeter, P , of the rectangle. Write your equation in its simplest form.

Grade 3: ELA

Read the passage. Then answer the questions that follow.

The History of Skateboarding

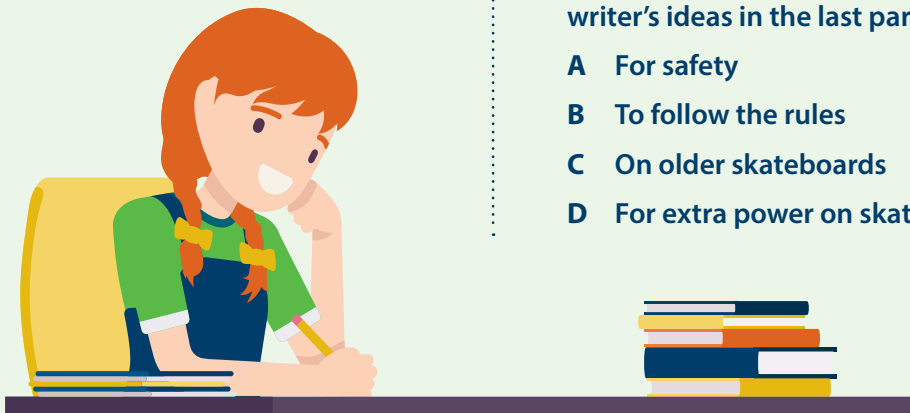
[16] People's love for skateboarding keeps growing today. [17] Many towns and cities have built special parks for skateboarders. [18] There is one more important thing that people who are interested in skateboarding should remember. [19] Skateboards are built better now than before, but people can still fall. [20] For things to wear, they should always wear helmets, knee pads, and gloves. [21] Then, they will be ready to learn and have fun.

Read this sentence.

[20] For things to wear, they should always wear helmets, knee pads, and gloves.

How should the underlined part of sentence 20 be changed to **best** join the writer's ideas in the last paragraph?

- A For safety
- B To follow the rules
- C On older skateboards
- D For extra power on skateboards



Useful Information for All

FAMILIES: Understanding Grade Level Performance

The NM-MSSA 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 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 NM-MSSA 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 are short term learning goals for my child to measure/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 NM-MSSA 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 NM-MSSA 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

NM-MSSA 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 NM-MSSA scores to understand what strategies and changes are working.



STATE LEADERS: Helping Schools Improve

State leaders use NM-MSSA 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 Webnew.PED.State.NM.us/Bureaus/Assessment-3/
- For answers to frequently asked questions, visit Webnew.PED.State.NM.us/Bureaus/Assessment-3/faqs/
- To see a practice test, visit NewMexico.OnlineHelp.Cognia.org/Practice-Tests-NM-MSSA/
- For ideas on how to support your child's learning at home, visit PTA.org/FamilyGuides
- For more information about the New Mexico PTA visit NewMexicoPTA.org/

