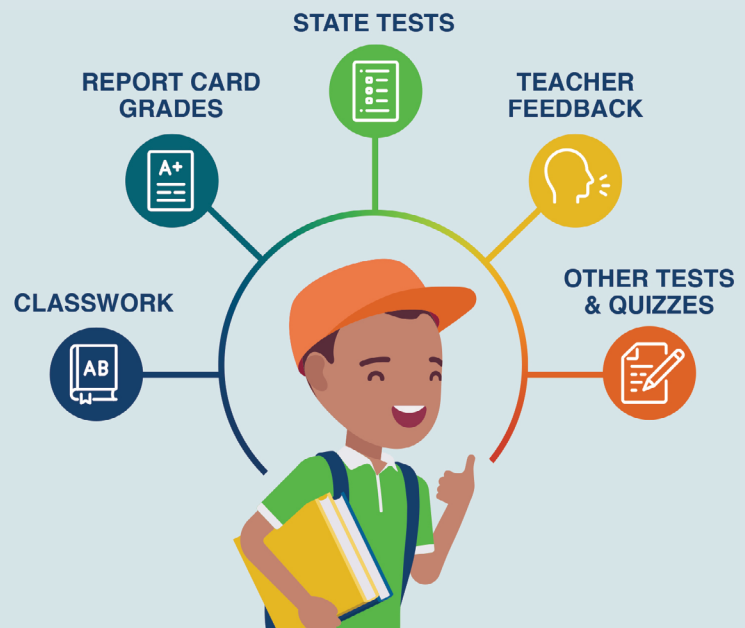




## A FAMILY GUIDE TO ANNUAL STATE TESTS IN SOUTH CAROLINA: One of Many Measures of Student Learning

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 South Carolina, students in third through eighth grade take SC READY in English language arts and math. Students in fourth and sixth grade also take a test in science and social studies. High school students take a test in Algebra 1, Biology 1, English 1 and 2 and U.S. History as part of the End-of-Course Exam Program (EOCEP).

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, South Carolina requires all third grade students to achieve a score in the approaches range or above to move onto fourth grade. If a student does not score in the approaches range, the school will provide additional support and interventions so the student can improve critical reading skills and retake the test.

## A Focus on Grade Level Skills

Unlike other tests, the SC READY 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 grade level skills that are most important for students to learn in order to move on to more challenging content.

The SC READY is taken online. It includes a variety of different types of questions, including traditional multiple choice, open-ended questions, and ones that ask students to write well developed essays.

### Grade 6: Math

Janet buys 4 bags of potatoes.

- The first bag has 8 potatoes in it.
- The second bag has 6 potatoes in it.
- The third bag has 10 potatoes in it.
- She has not yet counted the number of potatoes in the fourth bag.

To represent the total number of potatoes she has, Janet writes  $(8 + 6 + 10) + x$ , where  $x$  is the number of potatoes in the fourth bag. Which expression also represents the total number of potatoes Janet has?

- A  $2(4 + 3 + 5 + x)$
- B  $2(6 + 4 + 8) + x$
- C  $(8 + 6)(10 + x)$
- D  $(8 + 6) + (10 + x)$

### Grade 3: ELA

Read the paragraph from the passage.

After a while, Sarah noticed her brother staring silently at the water. She could tell that he was frustrated that he was not finding anything. But Sarah did not get upset. Instead, she continued to search the sandy stream thoroughly. Sarah was determined to give her brother a reason to be proud of her, not make him annoyed that she came along.

How does the author's choice of words contribute to meaning in the passage?

- A It shows that Sarah is less worried about getting dirty than Ben is.
- B It shows how much Sarah cares about the way Ben feels about her.
- C It shows that Sarah is more unsure about her task than Ben is.
- D It shows how much Sarah hopes she will find gold before Ben finds gold.



## Useful Information for All

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

The SC READY 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 SC Ready 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 SC READY 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 SC READY 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**

SC READY 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 SC READY scores to understand what strategies and changes are working.



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

State leaders use SC READY 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 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 [ED.SC.gov/Tests/Middle/SC-Ready/](https://ED.SC.gov/Tests/Middle/SC-Ready/)
- For sample test questions, visit [ED.SC.gov/Tests/Assessment-Information/Quick-Links-for-Teachers/Sample-Release-Items-for-SCpass-SC-Ready-and-eocep/](https://ED.SC.gov/Tests/Assessment-Information/Quick-Links-for-Teachers/Sample-Release-Items-for-SCpass-SC-Ready-and-eocep/)
- For ideas on how to support your child's learning at home, visit [PTA.org/FamilyGuides](https://PTA.org/FamilyGuides)
- For more information about the South Carolina PTA visit [SCPTA.org/](https://SCPTA.org/)

