



A FAMILY GUIDE TO ANNUAL STATE TESTS IN WEST VIRGINIA: 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 West Virginia, students in third through eighth grade take the West Virginia General Summative Assessments (WVGSA) in English language arts and math. Students in fifth, eighth and 10th grade also take a test in science. High school students take the WVGSA in 11th grade.

West Virginia public colleges and universities use WVGSA scores to determine if a student has the necessary skills to start taking college courses. Students who score in Level 3 or 4 are considered ready to take college classes and are exempt from taking remedial courses that don't count for credits.

A Focus on Grade Level Skills

Unlike other tests, WVGSA 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 everyday 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 WVGSA is taken online and is 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 traditional multiple choice questions, real world problems that ask students to show and explain their answer, and questions that ask students to write well developed essays.

Grade 6: Math

Ethan correctly answers 80% of the total questions on his history test. He correctly answers 32 questions.

Enter the number of questions on Ethan's history test.

Grade 3: ELA

The following question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

Part A

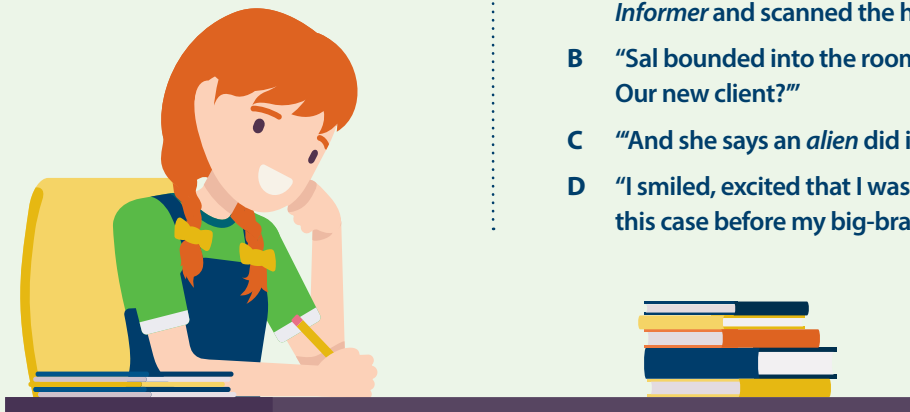
What does the first story show about Iggy and Sal?

- A Iggy is a better reader than Sal is.
- B Sal imagines things more than Iggy.
- C Sal and Iggy have only been partners for a short time.
- D Sal and Iggy try to be better than the other at solving cases.

Part B

Which statement from the story supports the response in Part A?

- A "I settled into my recliner with *The Insect Informer* and scanned the headlines:"
- B "Sal bounded into the room. 'Get this, Ig. Our new client?'"
- C "'And she says an *alien* did it!'"
- D "I smiled, excited that I was going to crack this case before my big-brained pal Sal."



Useful Information for All

FAMILIES: Understanding Grade Level Performance

The WVGSA 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 WVGSA 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 WVGSA 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 WVGSA 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

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



STATE LEADERS: Helping Schools Improve

State leaders use WVGSA 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 WVDE.us/Assessment/West-Virginia-General-Summative-Assessment-3-8/
- To see a practice test, visit WV.Portal.Cambiumast.com/Training-Tests.stml
- For ideas on how to support your child's learning at home, visit PTA.org/FamilyGuides
- For more information about the West Virginia PTA visit WestVirginiaPTA.org/

