



PARENTS' GUIDE TO NEW ASSESSMENTS IN MISSOURI

The Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) is designed to measure how well students acquire the skills and knowledge described in Missouri's Learning Standards (MLS). In the 2015-16 school year, classroom instruction across the state continues to be based on the current MLS. Assessments in the spring of 2016 will align to those standards. The assessments will use the same online platform and compatible devices as in 2015, and the ACT will still be administered to all Missouri students in grade 11.

Missouri lawmakers passed legislation in 2014 that directs changes to the MLS and to the MAP tests. It is expected that revised standards will be approved in March of 2016.

During the 2016-17 school year, local districts should prepare any necessary revisions to their curriculum based on changes made to the standards by this legislation. New assessments aligned to the standards will be developed and administered beginning in spring 2018.

This guide focuses on English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments.

Spring 2016 Assessments

WHY NEW ASSESSMENTS?

Teachers and principals talk a lot about assessments, which are used to measure students'

academic achievement. This document highlights the end-of-year summative assessments, which judge (1) student progress toward mastering state standards and (2) program and school effectiveness. For other assessment types, see box below.

Other types of assessments

Classroom-based: Individual tests given by teachers as needed throughout the year to assess knowledge and skills in specific areas

Interim: The same test repeated at set intervals to measure student growth over time

THIS GUIDE INCLUDES:

- Overview of new assessments which measure student proficiency against more rigorous standards
- Overview of accountability for students, teachers and schools
- Additional resources for parents

What is different about the 2016 assessments?

The new assessments for English and mathematics will enable educators to deepen their understanding of student progress from grade to grade—and just as importantly, identify any gaps in progress so they can address them **well before students enter college or the workforce.**

These are examples of what the ELA assessments will demonstrate:

- Whether students can read and comprehend texts of varying complexities
- How well students can integrate information across sources to make a persuasive argument
- The degree to which students can use context to determine the meaning of vocabulary

These are examples of what the mathematics assessments will demonstrate:

- Whether students understand and can use important math ideas, including number sense, algebraic thinking, geometry and data analysis
- The extent to which students can use math facts and reasoning skills to solve problems
- How well students can reason mathematically

In general,

- Performance events administered in the grade 5 and 8 assessments ask students to apply skills like thinking, reasoning and justifying answers—showing what they know and can do.
- Missouri uses computer-based assessments that are efficient, innovative and engaging, and they enable insight into student progress at multiple points. If necessary, students can be accommodated with Braille, large print or paper/pencil forms.
- The assessments provide measures of achievement and growth for all students, including those with disabilities and English language learners.

College and career readiness defined

The level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or in a high-quality certificate program that enables students to enter a career pathway with potential future advancement.

Sample Questions

THE GRADE-LEVEL ASSESSMENTS INCLUDE MULTIPLE TYPES OF QUESTIONS OR ITEMS:

- Selected Response (also known as multiple choice) items are composed of a question followed by a series of possible responses. Students must select the correct response or responses.
- Constructed Response or Short Text items require students to supply an appropriate response rather than making a selection from a list of choices.
- Performance Tasks/Events allow students to work through more complicated items using real-world scenarios.
- Technology Enhanced items make use of technology in the presentation of the item, the ways in which students respond, or both. For example, students might listen to a story and then drag and drop labels into a diagram, or click on specific parts of a text to provide a response.

Find samples of Grade-Level questions in the Online Tools Training (OTTs) on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website here: wbte.drcedirect.com/MO/portals/mo

Find samples of End-of-Course Questions under Pretests on the DESE website here: dese.mo.gov/college-career-readiness/assessment/end-course



What Parents Can Expect

MAP tests are designed to measure the rigorous expectations of the current state standards. The tests will continue to be revised as new standards are developed.

HOW SHOULD PARENTS INTERPRET SCORE REPORTS?

Each student receives an achievement level and a MAP scale score that is derived from the student's responses to the test items. It summarizes the overall level of performance for a particular subject or content area.

The Individual Student Report provides information about a student's performance in terms of four levels of achievement in a content area (Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic). The Guide to Interpreting Results provides more detailed information about the achievement levels and scale scores.

HOW WILL SCHOOLS SUPPORT STUDENTS DURING THE TRANSITION?

Schools have created a variety of models to assist students who are struggling with the standards.

Remediation and summer courses, in-class adjustments based on ongoing in-class assessment results and pull-out tutoring are just a few support strategies. Parents should collaborate with teachers and administrators to develop a plan as needed.

Parents should check with their local school districts for services available in each school.

TAKE ACTION:

Parents can work with school or district curriculum directors to learn about the new curriculum and understand how to support their children to minimize any dips in assessment scores.

HOW ARE SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS HELD ACCOUNTABLE?

Every Missouri school district receives an annual performance report that gives an overview of the



state's many accountability measures. The report includes MAP test results, college and career readiness measures, graduation rates and attendance data. The state uses this report to accredit each district.

For students, even if a student does not meet proficiency levels, there will be no negative consequences such as holding the student back a year. Instead, parents can work with the school to develop an improvement plan tailored to the specific student's needs.



Take Action

Parents are their child's best advocates. As a parent and your child's first teacher you should be informed of the assessment and accountability system that is in place in your child's school. Parents and families must be at the table with school leaders and school districts to ensure that testing is implemented well and with enough resources to ensure success.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education should include parents and teachers in thoughtful conversations based on trust, collaboration and respect. For additional details about the state's assessment and accountability plan, please call the Department at (573) 751-4212. Here are some questions you might want to ask:

- How many assessments does my child take this school year and where can I access/view the assessment calendar?
- What will happen if my child does not meet proficiency on the new assessments?
- How will the results of tests be used to support my child's learning?
- What can I do, as a parent, to help my child do his or her best?
- How will school evaluations be affected based on results of the new assessments?

Also, be sure to speak with your local school administrators! Ask them to host a parent night in the spring to explain the tests and in the fall to explain test results.

Below is the list of policies and practices that National PTA supports. Check with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to determine if their policies and practices are closely aligned with those of the PTA.

- National PTA believes that valid assessment does not consist of only a single test score, and that at no time should a single test be considered the sole determinant of a student's academic or work future.
- National PTA supports nationally agreed upon voluntary standards if they are derived by consensus at the state and local levels. Parents must be involved in this process.
- National PTA believes that assessments provide valuable information to parents, teachers and school leaders about the growth and achievement of their students. Furthermore, having annual data on the performance of students can help inform teaching and learning as well as identify achievement gaps among groups of students within a school and among a school district. National PTA believes assessments are essential to ensure that all students receive a high-quality education.

Preparing and Supporting Your Child

- Review the testing calendar, and work with your child's school to ensure there will be regular and clear communications from the school on the assessments, the results and how they are used.
- Discuss the new tests with your children. Make sure they feel comfortable and understand why they are taking a test.
- With older children, explain that the new assessments were created to make sure they are on track to succeed after graduation and to identify any issues early enough to give them more support.
- Explain to your child that the tests will initially be more challenging. Tell your child you have high expectations and you and the teachers are there to help every step of the way.
- Review test results with your child and his or her teacher.
- Make sure your child has a comfortable place for studying and is prepared mentally and physically for a test.

Staying informed and involved

- Become familiar with what's going on with Missouri's Learning Standards, visit: missourilearningstandards.com
- Learn more about MAP tests, visit: missourilearningstandards.com/missouri-assessment-program/
- Read all comments written by the teacher on classroom lessons and tests. Ask teachers to explain anything that is unclear, and discuss how you can best work together to address areas of improvement for your child.
- Monitor your child's progress, and regularly communicate with your child's teachers. If your child needs extra help or wants to learn more about a subject, work with his or her teacher to identify opportunities for tutoring, after-school clubs or other resources.
- Tests are not perfect measures of what a child can do. There are many other factors that might influence a test score. For example, a child can be affected by the way he or she is feeling on test day or the particular classroom setting.
- Meet with your child's teacher as often as possible to discuss his or her progress. Ask for activities to do at home to help prepare for tests and improve your child's proficiency.

Additional resources

- Visit the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Department of Education web site: dese.mo.gov.
- You can learn more about services for parents and students at dese.mo.gov/parents-students.