



PARENTS' GUIDE TO NEW ASSESSMENTS IN OKLAHOMA

During the 2015-16 school year, students in Oklahoma took the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCTs) that are aligned to the state's current academic standards, called the Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS). This guide focuses on OCCTs for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, which are administered in grades 3-8 and after completion of specific high school courses.

The OCCT are part of the Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP). These assessments gauge how well students are mastering the standards—and ultimately how ready they are for the next grade and for college and careers after graduation.

State legislation passed in 2014 requires Oklahoma to develop new academic standards for ELA and mathematics to be ready in 2016. The resulting standards, which will replace PASS, will be implemented in the 2016-17 school year. They will reflect Oklahoma values and principles and will be based on the existing PASS standards.

Once the new standards are implemented, the Oklahoma State Department of Education will ensure that the Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP) reflects the revised standards. For more information, visit: sde.ok.gov/sde/oklahoma-academic-standards

Oklahoma State Department of Education developed a series of Parent, Student and Teacher Guides to provide a list of test-taking tips, objectives covered in the tests, and practice tests for each grade:

- For details on OCCTs in grades 3-8, visit:
oklahoma.onlinehelp.measuredprogress.org/occt-parent-student-teacher-guides-2015-2016
- For details on high school End-of-Instruction OCCTs, visit:
oklahoma.onlinehelp.measuredprogress.org/eoi-parent-student-teacher-guides-2015-2016

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



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.

New summative assessments will address longstanding concerns that parents, educators and employers have had about current state assessments—namely that they measure ability to memorize facts, rather than the skills to think critically and apply knowledge.

What is different about the new 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.**

Reading 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 academic vocabulary.

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 real-world problems.
- How well students can make math arguments.

Benefits of New Assessments:

- The assessments allow students to show their work and explain their reasoning so teachers can better understand what they know and where there are gaps in learning that need to be addressed.
- Rather than focusing on what a child has memorized through multiple-choice questions, the new tests ask students to apply skills like thinking, reasoning and justifying answers—showing what they know and can do.
- The tests do not lend themselves to “teaching to the test.” Since they focus on applying skills, it is the daily practice of these skills in the classroom that will serve as the best preparation for the tests.
- All OCCTs for grades 6-8 (except Grade 8 Writing) must be administered online. A paper/pencil version of these tests is available for students who need an alternate format or are unable to access computer-based tests. Computer-based assessments are more efficient, innovative and engaging, and they enable insight into student progress at multiple points.
- The new assessments will be designed to provide accurate 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 by grade level

The following questions are representative of those found on the new assessments.

EXAMPLE OF A 3RD GRADE MATHEMATICS QUESTION

SAMPLE ITEM

Which list shows three numbers in order from least to greatest?

- | | | | |
|----|-------|-------|-------|
| A. | 1,739 | 1,985 | 2,808 |
| B. | 1,739 | 2,808 | 1,985 |
| C. | 2,808 | 1,985 | 1,739 |
| D. | 2,808 | 1,739 | 1,985 |

EXAMPLE OF A 7TH GRADE READING QUESTION

SAMPLE ITEM

Direction: Read each selection and the questions that follow it. Choose the best answer for each question. Find the question number on the Reading practice test. Mark your answer in the Reading section of the answer sheet.

The Best Fit

1. After school, Tanner went straight to the gym. He couldn't wait to check the list to see if he'd made the basketball team. Seeing that his name wasn't there, Tanner sadly walked away, wondering if he could do anything well.
2. About that time, Coach Jenkins caught up with Tanner and told him how sorry he was that Tanner had not made the team.
3. "Tanner, you're the most organized kid I know," said Coach Jenkins. "No matter what the sport or activity is, you always know what needs to be done, and you do it without complaining. That's why I'd like for you to be our team manager."
4. "I never realized that being a manager required so much skill. If you really need me, I'll be glad to do it," Tanner said, smiling.
5. "Great!" Coach Jenkins said as he smiled back.

Coach Jenkins describes Tanner as

- | | |
|----|----------------------------|
| A. | having athletic abilities. |
| B. | being knowledgeable. |
| C. | being well organized. |
| D. | having many talents. |

EXAMPLE OF AN END-OF-INSTRUCTION OCCT QUESTION FOR ACE ALGEBRA I

SAMPLE ITEM

If $f(x)=2x-5$, which expression represents $f(x+1)$?

- | | |
|----|----------|
| A. | $2x - 3$ |
| B. | $2x - 4$ |
| C. | $2x - 5$ |
| D. | $2x + 7$ |

What Parents Can Expect



OCCTs are designed to measure the more rigorous expectations of the current state standards. Oklahoma's new standards, which more closely reflect the state's educational values, will also have higher expectations of students. Because the new tests will measure complex skills, which are different from the skills measured by previous state tests, scores on OCCTs will initially look lower. But students aren't doing worse—it's just that the bar is higher.

As students and teachers gain the skills and knowledge needed to meet the new, higher standards, performance will also improve. In other states where more rigorous tests have been implemented, students improved their performance after the first year.

Online practice tests are available to help parents and students know what to expect with the most recent technology-enhanced tests. Directions for accessing the practice tests can be found at: oklahoma.onlinehelp.measuredprogress.org/occt-parent-student-teacher-guides-2015-2016

How should parents interpret score reports?

A student's performance is reported at one of four performance levels:

1. Advanced
2. Proficient
3. Limited Knowledge
4. Unsatisfactory

For more information about these tests and others given in Oklahoma, visit:

oklahoma.onlinehelp.measuredprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/07/OSTP_FAQ_v01.09.15.pdf

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.

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, students, and teachers held accountable?

In light of the changes to both standards and assessments, Oklahoma is continually working to revise its accountability plan.

In 2011, Oklahoma adopted an A-F school grading system. It is designed to motivate schools to strive for and reach high levels of college- and career-readiness. Unlike previous systems of school accountability, this system clearly demonstrates students' progress at each school toward meeting grade-level academic standards. The Highly Objective Uniform Statewide Standard of Evaluation for Principals and Assistant Principals (HOUSSE-P) is administered annually. It considers instructional leadership, communication, professional development and operations management.

The A-F Report Card indicates:

- The percentage of students, regardless of background, within a school who are currently meeting or exceeding grade-level academic standards
- The percentage of students (particularly lower-performing students) who are at least making significant progress toward meeting grade-level academic standards
- Whether schools are exceeding expectations in terms of school attendance, high school graduation, etc. (via the awarding of bonus points)

Student accountability is determined by Oklahoma School Testing Program. Oklahoma state test results are used to assess student achievement; target student, classroom, and program improvement; and inform parents of student progress.

If a student does not receive a proficient score, they will be provided help and given a chance to retake the same test. They will also have other options, such as taking another State Board of Education-approved alternate test and receiving a satisfactory/proficient score.

In some cases students can demonstrate mastery of the subject matter through an end-of-course-project designed and approved by the SDE.

The new plan will also articulate teacher accountability measures ensuring that teacher effectiveness ratings are measured against student progress throughout the year. In the meantime, teacher evaluation criteria will remain the same.



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.

Oklahoma should include parents and teachers in thoughtful conversations based on trust, collaboration and respect. For additional details about the assessment and accountability system, please call the Oklahoma State Department of Education at (405) 521-3301. Here are some questions you might want to ask:

- How many assessments will 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 levels 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 Oklahoma State Department of Education to determine if the state's policies and practices are closely aligned.

- 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 school districts. 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 child. Make sure he or she feels comfortable and understands the importance of taking the 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 that 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

- To learn more about the status of Oklahoma's new academic standards, visit: sde.ok.gov/sde/oklahoma-academic-standards
- To learn more about Oklahoma assessments, visit: sde.ok.gov/sde/office-assessments
- Read Parent, Student and Teacher Guides that provide a list of test-taking tips, objectives covered in the tests and practice tests for each grade:
 - For details on OCCTs in grades 3-8, visit: oklahoma.onlinehelp.measuredprogress.org/occt-parent-student-teacher-guides-2015-2016
 - For details on high school End-of-Instruction OCCTs, visit: oklahoma.onlinehelp.measuredprogress.org/eoi-parent-student-teacher-guides-2015-2016
- 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 Oklahoma State Department of Education website: sde.ok.gov/sde