



FAMILY GUIDE TO ASSESSMENTS:

*Questions to Ask About Your Child's
Assessment Results and Why They Matter*

This document provides you with questions to ask educators and school leaders about how your child(ren) and other children in their school are performing and progressing academically, as well as key context about why each question is important and a brief overview of different types of assessments your child may take over the course of the year. Having a full understanding of your child's academic performance is critical for ensuring they are on track to meet grade-level standards for graduation, identifying potential areas for growth, and advocating for any needed academic supports. The annual statewide assessment plays a vital role in measuring student progress so parents and educators have the best information to support teaching and learning, address learning gaps, improve outcomes and ensure equity for all children.



HOW IS MY CHILD PERFORMING FOR THEIR GRADE LEVEL?

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? The written reports that parents receive on the state assessment often focus on how your child is doing *compared to other students* throughout your state (that's what's happening whenever you hear "percentile").

Grades often incorporate factors such as behavior, effort, and work completion and are based on content presented in class, which—especially for students from low-income families, students of color, students with disabilities, and English learners—doesn't always match the rigor of grade-level expectations. And other assessments your child may take during the year, such as teacher-created tests and quizzes or interim assessments like i-Ready or MAP, may not be aligned to grade-level standards or only cover a portion of grade-level skills and content.

While these measures provide valuable information about how your child is performing academically, it's worthwhile to also ask your child's teachers about their performance specifically against *grade-level standards*. These standards are set by each state and can help you to understand whether your child is on track for graduation and is prepared for college and careers.

The annual statewide assessment is the only one specifically designed to measure whether your child is reading and doing math on grade level. Knowing how your child is performing toward grade-level standards helps you understand where your child is excelling, and where they need additional support. If your child isn't at grade level in one or more areas, you can use that information to advocate on their behalf for additional academic supports.



HOW HAS MY CHILD GROWN ACADEMICALLY SINCE LAST YEAR?

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? In addition to knowing how your child is performing against grade-level standards, understanding how much your child is progressing over the course of a school year is important to know where they excel and where they may need additional supports. For example, if your child was performing at grade level at the end of 3rd grade, they should achieve at least one year's worth of growth over the course of a school year—meaning they would learn all or more of the 4th-grade content by the end of 4th grade. However, if your child was not performing at grade level at the end of 3rd grade, educators should be working on catching them up—meaning they would achieve more than a single year of growth over the course of the school year and end the year reading and doing math at the 4th grade level.

Due to disruptions from the pandemic, many students across the country have not taken annual statewide assessments since the 2018-19 school year, missing two opportunities to check up on their academic growth in the spring of 2020 and 2021. Other students may have missed one, but not both, of these checkups. If your child did take a state assessment last spring, teachers should be able to tell you how much progress he or she made from last year to this year. But even if your child hasn't taken the state test in two years, educators should still be able to tell you how your child is progressing.

For example, for students who were old enough to take assessments in 2019, school leaders should be able to use Spring 2022 assessments to show you how much progress they have made since the year before the pandemic started. Given the many interruptions to learning since the start of the pandemic, it's possible that your child has not made as much progress as they did before the pandemic and needs additional support to reach grade level. This is important information that can be used to advocate for additional support services for your child such as small group tutoring.



HOW ARE STUDENTS IN MY CHILD'S SCHOOL PERFORMING COMPARED TO OTHER SCHOOLS IN THE STATE?

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Data from the annual statewide assessment are the only data points that can accurately compare student academic performance in subjects including math, English/Language Arts, and science between student groups, schools, and districts across the

state. Knowing how your school compares to other schools across the state can provide you and other families with information to push for additional resources, services, and opportunities for the students in your school. Assessments results can also point to schools that are serving students, or a particular group of students, well so your school leaders can learn from those schools, and also allows families to make informed choices about what schools may best serve their child(ren) in communities with school choice options.



ARE ALL STUDENTS IN MY CHILD'S SCHOOL PERFORMING SIMILARLY? IF NOT, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO CLOSE OPPORTUNITY GAPS?

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? All students deserve a high quality, equitable education and can thrive with access to the resources and supports they need to succeed, yet students from low-income families, students of color, English Learners, students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, and other underserved students have been historically and systematically denied access to educational resources and opportunities such as [experienced teachers](#) and [advanced classes](#)—even within the same school.

These barriers and historic inequities have often been reflected in lower scores on the annual statewide assessment for certain groups of students. Therefore, comparing the performance of students from different student groups—along with other data (see below)—could indicate whether certain students or groups of students are being denied sufficient opportunities to learn within your school. It's your school's responsibility to address these gaps, so families should ask their principals how they are planning to address any gaps that exist and follow up to ensure these plans are being implemented.



HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT MY CHILD HAS THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO LEARN? WHAT OTHER DATA ARE YOU LOOKING AT TO DETERMINE HOW MY CHILD IS PERFORMING?

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? While the data provided by the annual statewide assessment is critically important for determining how your child and other students in your school are performing and being supported academically—especially whether they are meeting grade-level expectations and are on-track to graduate—other data such as attendance; enrollment changes;

suspension or expulsion rates; EL reclassification, access to experienced teachers; available support services; and access to electronic devices, advanced coursework, and extracurriculars can help provide the needed context to understand the *why* behind student achievement.



HOW IS OUR SCHOOL PLANNING TO USE ANNUAL STATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS TO ADJUST TEACHING OR PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR MY CHILD AND/OR FOR OTHER STUDENTS?

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? The results of the annual statewide assessment can inform how teachers and principals provide students with additional support—such as high-impact tutoring—and which students need these services most in order to access and master grade-level content.

This is particularly important in the next few years because of the historic amount of federal COVID-19 relief money that has been given to states and districts specifically for providing additional academic and mental health supports to address the impacts of the pandemic on your child and their classmates. Ask your child’s principals how they plan to use assessment results to ensure this money is used to provide support services for students that need them most.

QUICK GUIDE TO ASSESSMENT TYPES

Below is a brief overview of the different types of assessments that students will likely take over the course of the year. Having a basic understanding about each type of assessment can help you when you are discussing results from any type of assessment with teachers or school leaders.

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS

- **What They Are/Can Do**
 - Gauge student skills *prior* to instruction
 - Provide a baseline for determining student growth over the course of the year
- **What They Are Not/Can’t Do**
 - May not be directly aligned to state academic standards
 - Don’t provide comparable data across students in different classrooms, schools, or districts

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

- *What They Are/Can Do*
 - Gauge student understanding to directly inform instructional decisions
 - Focused on single skills or concepts
 - Range from entrance or exit tickets to teacher-designed quizzes and tests
- *What They Are Not/Can't Do*
 - May not be directly aligned to state academic standards
 - Don't provide comparable data across students in different classrooms, schools, or districts

INTERIM ASSESSMENTS

- *What They Are/Can Do*
 - Assessments conducted a few times throughout the year to ensure students are on track to and making progress
 - Used to identify students for formal interventions or support services
- *What They Are Not/Can't Do*
 - Don't directly inform day-to-day instruction
 - Don't provide comparable data across different schools or districts
 - Don't assess student growth from year-to-year

ANNUAL STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS

- *What They Are/Can Do*
 - Measurement of student achievement against state academic standards, aligned to skills and knowledge needed for postsecondary success
 - Focused on all the content and skills for current grade-level
 - Allows for results to be compared between students, student groups, schools, and districts
- *What They Are Not/Can't Do*
 - Don't provide information to make direct, real-time changes to instruction
 - Don't measure whether students are learning content that is above or below their grade level

