



PARENTS' GUIDE TO NEW Assessments in Ohio

In June 2010, Ohio adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). CCSS provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics as they progress through grades K-12.

In the 2014-2015 school year, Ohio will begin rolling out new assessments aligned to the CCSS. The new assessments are being used to gauge how well students are mastering the standards – and ultimately how ready students are to succeed in college and careers.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS (CCSS)?

Common Core State Standards are designed to enhance and improve student learning. CCSS have greater clarity and rigor than previous standards. They are relevant to the real world, giving young people the knowledge and skills they need for college and career success. CCSS are also robust, ensuring a future U.S. workforce that can compete in the global economy.

The new standards emphasize fewer topics and stress not only rote skills, but also conceptual and critical thinking. The CCSS build knowledge from grade to grade, enabling students to master important concepts before moving on to others.

The standards are not a curriculum. Decisions about curriculum, tools, materials, and textbooks are left to local districts and schools that know their students best.

The CCSS were developed through a state-led initiative, spearheaded by governors and school superintendents in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, college faculty, parents, and education experts. They build on the excellent foundation laid across all states, and have been internationally benchmarked to ensure rigor on par with top-performing nations.

To date, more than 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the CCSS.

In 2010, Ohio began implementing CCSS changes in each district, school, and classroom. To prepare educators, Ohio has implemented a range of professional development activities. During 2012-2013, professional development for teachers statewide focused on the changes necessary to implement Ohio's New Learning Standards. The standards include Common Core ELA and math, as well as Ohio-developed standards for science and social studies. In a 2013 Summer Academy, regional educational leaders gathered to learn and share information. They will continue to meet and take new information back to their districts.

For every content area and grade level, resources are noted throughout Ohio's New Learning Standards and Model Curriculum, including educational sites with real-world data, activities, and other information. Educators can access these resources as they implement the learning standards. New resources will be added as they are identified.

THIS GUIDE INCLUDES:

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

CCSS-Aligned 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 student progress toward mastering state standards and program and school effectiveness. For other assessments used, see box at right.

New summative assessments will address longstanding concerns that parents, educators, and employers have had about current state assessments – namely that they measure students' ability to memorize facts, rather than their critical thinking and knowledge application skills.

The state assessments are just one of several measures used to gauge a student's learning progress. Except for third-grade reading, there is no state test that determines promotion or retention.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THE NEW ASSESSMENTS?

The new assessments enable educators to deepen their understanding of student progress from grade to grade—and identify and address any gaps in progress **well before students enter college or the workforce.**

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

Summative: End-of-year assessments administered by the state to measure student performance against a common set of standards

This document addresses summative assessments.

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 academic vocabulary.

Math 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

- Over the next few years, assessments will provide results more and more quickly and in an increasingly readable and easy-to-understand format, most likely online. Parents can use this information to better communicate with teachers and school administrators about their child's progress, and teachers can use it to better tailor instruction to the child's needs.
- Computer-based assessments will replace pencil and paper tests. (Exceptions will be made for schools that do not yet have the technology.) Computer-based assessments are more efficient, innovative, and engaging, and they enable insight into student progress at multiple points.
- New assessments will allow Ohio to compare student performance across schools and districts statewide, as well as with students in other states that have adopted the Common Core.
- School districts will have access to sample questions and online practice tests to help parents prepare their children for assessments.
- The new assessments are designed to provide accurate measures of achievement and growth for all students, including those with disabilities and English language learners. Online assessments can address visual, auditory, and physical access barriers for students with disabilities, and enable them to take tests at the same time as others in their class. English language learners will be able to demonstrate knowledge in the various content areas (e.g., math, science, and social science), regardless of their level of proficiency in English. The intention is not to give these students an advantage, but to provide the accessibility needed for accurate results.

Who is developing the new assessments?

Because CCSS is a state-led initiative, most states chose to join one of two consortia of states working together to develop new assessments based on Common Core State Standards. These are SMARTER Balanced and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

Ohio is a member of PARCC, along with 20 other states and territories. Customization and final decisions about assessments remain at the state level, in partnership with local educators.

Read more about PARCC at www.parcconline.org.

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. For more examples visit www.parconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes.

EXAMPLE OF A 4TH GRADE MATH QUESTION

Three classes at Lakeview School are going on a field trip. The Table shows the number of people in each class, including the teacher.

They can choose to use buses, vans, and cars.



Buses have 20 seats



Vans have 16 seats



Cars have 5 seats

| | Total number of people |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Mrs. Ruiz's Class | 23 |
| Mr. Yangs's Class | 25 |
| Mrs. Evan's Class | 24 |

Which three combinations can be used to take all three classes on a field trip?

- 1 bus and 4 vans 1 bus and 8 cars
 3 vans and 11 cars 2 buses and 3 vans and 4 cars
 1 bus and 1 van and 6 cars

Submit Answer

EXAMPLE OF A 6TH GRADE ELA QUESTION

Students are asked to read a passage from the fictional text "Julie of the Wolves" by Jean C. George and answer the following:

SAMPLE ITEM

In the passage, the author developed a strong character named Miyax. Think about Miyax and the details the author used to create the character. The passage ends with Miyax waiting for the black wolf to look at her.

Write an original story to continue where the passage ended. In your story, be sure to use what you have learned about the character Miyax as you tell what happens to her next.

Answer:

EXAMPLE OF A 10TH GRADE ELA QUESTION

SAMPLE ITEM

Use what you have learned from reading "Daedalus and Icarus" by Ovid and "To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Triumph" by Anne Sexton to write an essay that provides an analysis of how Sexton transforms Daedalus and Icarus.

As a starting point, you may want to consider what is emphasized, absent, or different in the two texts, but feel free to develop your own focus for analysis.

Develop your essay by providing textual evidence from both texts. Be sure to follow the conventions of standard English.

Answer:

What Parents Can Expect

This is a new set of standards and assessments with a new way of scoring. Therefore, it is not possible to directly compare new scores with old ones.

The new assessments measure deeper knowledge and skills deemed particularly important for students' futures, including problem-solving, writing, and critical thinking.

Because the standards are more rigorous, student achievement scores may initially be lower.

A dip should not necessarily be interpreted as a decline in student learning or educator performance. Educators expect the short-term decline to reverse as teachers and students become more familiar with the standards and better equipped to meet the challenges they present.

How are students held accountable?

As noted previously, except for special circumstances, students must meet a minimum score on the state's third-grade reading test to move on to fourth grade. Schools also can move a student to fourth grade in the middle of the year if the student's reading improves. Assessment results are not a consideration in promotion for any other grade.

How will schools support students during the transition?

Schools have created a variety of models to assist students who are struggling with the standards. If a child is not succeeding, a plan for improvement based on individual needs is developed. Teachers and administrators in a local school and school district identify the support needed for each

struggling student and work closely with the parents to help create and implement the individualized improvement plan.

How are teachers held accountable?

Ohio has a new teacher evaluation system. Fifty percent of the evaluation is student knowledge growth over the semester or school year. Data from state tests, in subjects and grades where they are available, are used to measure student growth. For teachers in other subjects and grades, student growth is measured by a combination of other tests and local measures. This system will remain in place once the new assessments are implemented.

How are schools held accountable?

Ohio is changing the way it measures and rates the performance of schools and districts. The 2012-2013 school and district report cards grade schools and districts on a mix of new and previously used items with an A-F letter-grade system.

Previous school and district report cards were based mostly on how well students performed on state achievement tests. Achievement tests are still a major part of school and district grades, but the new report card views them in a more comprehensive way. Once the new assessments are implemented, the results will be used to measure and rate school and district performance.

Preparing and supporting your child

- Discuss the new tests with your child. Make sure he or she is not afraid or anxious going into the new tests.
- With an older child, explain that the new assessments were created to make sure he or she is on track to succeed after graduation and to identify any issues early enough to give more support where it is needed.
- Explain to your child that the tests will initially be more challenging. Tell your child you have high expectations and that you are there to help every step of the way.
- Review test results with your child, taking time to discuss areas of strength and areas where there is room for improvement. Bring the teacher into the discussion as needed.
- Provide a quiet, comfortable place for studying at home and make sure your child gets a good night's sleep before a test.

Staying informed and involved

- Become familiar with the Common Core State Standards.
- View samples of new test questions and get more information regarding how PARCC assessments were developed at www.parcconline.org.
- Read all comments written by the teacher on classroom lessons and tests. Ask the teacher to explain anything that is unclear and discuss how you can best work together to address comments.
- Monitor your child's progress. 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.
- Understand that tests are not perfect measures of what a child can do. Scores can be affected by the way he or she is feeling on test day or the particular classroom setting. Assessments are useful but should not be the only factor in determining a child's academic growth.
- Meet with your child's teacher as often as possible to discuss your child's progress. Ask for activities to do at home to help prepare for tests and improve your child's proficiency.

Additional Resources

- For more detailed look at what CCSS mean at each grade level: www.pta.org/parentsguide
- For information on the implementation of CCSS in Ohio visit: www.education.ohio.gov
- For information on the PARCC consortium, of which Ohio is a member, visit: www.parcconline.org