

A BIG WIN FOR MISSOURI STUDENTS

The Missouri Learning Standards



In 2010, Missouri's on-time graduation rate was 81%. Despite having a strong high school graduation rate, students still lacked the skills necessary to be 21st century learners. On the Nation's Report Card, also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), less than half of our students in every grade were proficient in both math and reading. In 2010, the Missouri State Board of Education adopted a set of academic standards in math and English language arts that are higher, clearer, and more focused on the skills that matter most.

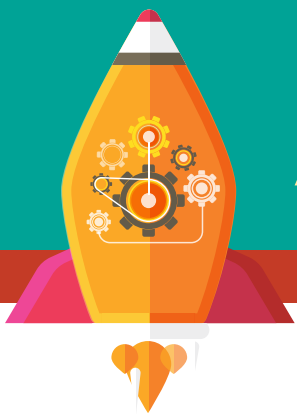
Prior to adopting the Missouri Learning Standards, the state was headed in the wrong direction. The previous state standards were broad and often difficult to interpret, with the same expectations appearing in multiple grades. They did not prioritize the skills students need to succeed in college and careers. They were described as some of the worst in the country by the

They were described as some of the worst in the country by the Fordham Institute and received a 'D' in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's 2007 *Leaders and Laggards* report for lack of rigor. Although 51% of our 8th graders were proficient on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) in 2011, only 31% reached proficiency on a more rigorous international math assessment, Trends in International Math Science Study, commonly referred to as TIMSS. In addition, almost one-third of students entering Missouri state colleges and universities must enroll in remedial courses because they lack the skills necessary to complete college-level work.

With the higher standards, Missouri is one step closer to ensuring that students will have the opportunity to reach their full potential. By 2018, there will be 1.4 million job openings in the state, 63% of which will require some education beyond high school. By raising the bar, we can be confident that our students will be qualified to fill these jobs, contributing to the growth of our economy.

Missouri's Proficiency Rates on the Nation's Report Card

Year	4th Math	4th Reading	8th Math	8th Reading
2011	41%	34%	32%	35%
2013	39%	35%	33%	36%



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Better Standards Deserve Better Assessments

For the past five years, teachers across Missouri have been hard at work preparing for and implementing the standards. It has been a significant undertaking involving countless hours participating in professional development, designing new curricula, and learning strategies to engage students more deeply than ever before. Teachers created and shared more than 100 aligned units as online resources to be used as models throughout the state before the standards were fully implemented last year.

The next phase of this work is to implement a test in Missouri that provides information to help guide teacher instruction and help parents better understand the skills their children have mastered in order to be prepared for success.

Over the past four years, teams of academic experts and teachers have been working tirelessly to create two testing options aligned to higher standards: Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. Missouri has been a member of the Smarter Balanced consortium since 2010. These two tests were field-tested this past spring in 35 states and Washington, D.C. The tests aim to:

- Accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness;
- Assess a wide range of skills, including real-world critical thinking and writing skills; and
- Provide real-time information on student progress to help guide teacher instruction and improve learning.

Putting better assessments in place is not enough. They need to be part of a larger system of accountability that supports student achievement and holds schools responsible for successfully teaching the skills outlined in the standards. At the heart of accountability is the need to ensure that all students across Missouri are receiving the same high-quality

education. Meaningful tests serve as school-wide academic checkups that can identify struggling students and schools in need of extra support. In addition, improved assessments can identify high-achieving students who require support to maintain their academic engagement and provide them the resources necessary to continue to help them excel.

During this time of transition, it is important to advocate for the key criteria that will make the state test a strong measuring stick of how our students are doing on the path to college and careers. Leaders continue to be enthusiastic about the Smarter Balanced assessments because they include so many of the criteria that make up a high-quality aligned test and mean higher quality instruction for all students. As advocates, we need to ensure that our state test not only accurately measures college and career readiness, but also possesses these characteristics to make it a useful tool to help students improve.

What Does a High-Quality Assessment Look Like?

A high-quality assessment is:

- Developed with input from both academic and testing experts—and most importantly, teachers;
- Field-tested and reviewed before full implementation;
- Assesses a wide range of real-world skills using a variety of question formats;
- Measures the full range of content and levels of thinking that students are practicing in the classroom, so there is no need for extensive test preparation;
- Includes formative or interim assessments that act as “academic checkups” to ensure students are keeping pace;
- Provides detailed and timely feedback to parents and teachers that shows long-term individual student growth;
- Sends an early warning signal to teachers if students are struggling or excelling, so additional interventions or challenges can be put in place;
- Comparable across states; and
- Available online.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between a curriculum and standards?

- Standards are a set of guidelines for what students are expected to know and be able to do at specific points in their education. They provide the foundation for key components of the education system, including curricula, instructional materials, teacher training, and assessments.
- A curriculum is how the standards are taught. Local districts make decisions regarding curricula, and teachers choose the instructional strategies used in the classroom.

2. If students are learning with different curricula, how can they take the same test?

- Although teachers use different materials and curricula, students still learn the same skills. Because the aligned tests prioritize assessing skills over rote memorization of content, it is possible for teachers to be creative in their lessons while still instructing the standards and preparing students. When teachers are creative in their instruction, they can design lessons that best reach their students, creating a classroom where all students can achieve.

3. Will the updated test replace the old state test?

- Yes. Beginning this school year, the English language arts and math Smarter Balanced assessments will become a part of the MAP. They will replace the grade-level testing for language arts and math in grades 3–8 and high school end-of-course tests in English 1, Algebra 1 and 2, Biology, and Government. MAP testing will continue in other subject areas.

4. How will test scores impact students?

- Third grade students must score proficient in reading to be promoted to 4th grade. There are currently no testing requirements for graduation.

5. How will test scores impact teachers?

- Missouri teacher evaluations include a category for 'Student Growth and Development,' which includes standardized test scores as evidence of student growth. Because the role of a teacher is much larger than can be measured by a test score alone, this category is only one of seven on which teachers are evaluated. Other areas include content knowledge, classroom environment, and effective communication. The teacher



Why Support the Missouri Learning Standards?

- They are more rigorous academic standards that help prepare all students for success after high school.
- They emphasize real-world skills like critical thinking and problem-solving.
- They hold all students to the same high expectations and are comparable across the state and nation.

Why Do We Need Good Tests?

- They give us an honest, objective report of how our students are doing.
- They ensure all students are held to the same expectations.
- They identify struggling students so they can get the help they need.

evaluation system has been field-tested and piloted by hundreds of teachers across the state. A single test score does not make or break a teacher's career.

6. How will test scores impact schools and districts?

- School-wide test results are only one of the measures used for school accountability. Just as we use tests as academic checkups for individual students, they are also used as checkups on our schools. We need to identify areas of low performance so that interventions can be put in place to ensure students are on track to graduate college and career ready.

7. What kind of data will be collected? Will it be released?

- Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Missouri is required to collect data on the performance of schools. Data collected will include student test scores and information such as attendance, support services, and academic growth. Federal law protects the privacy of student information and education records through the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- This past summer, Missouri enacted a law that provides guidelines for student data collection. Any type of personally identifiable student information will only be available to teachers, administrators, school personnel, and parents. The Department of Education is also prohibited from collecting and using certain types of information, such as religious and political affiliation. The only information that will be publicly available will contain aggregate data for schools and districts.

8. How were teachers involved in the test development process?

- Missouri teachers were involved in a review of the test questions for content, bias/sensitivity, and accessibility. They also assisted with the development of learning resources in the Digital Library, an online collection of aligned resources to support teachers as they adjust to teaching the standards.

9. How long will the tests take?

- The Smarter Balanced consortium estimates that total testing time will range from 7 to 8.5 hours over a three-month period. This estimate includes both a performance-based task and an end-of-year test given at separate times.
- The aligned tests are of much higher quality, so the time invested will provide us with more detailed and useful information on student progress than ever

What is Smarter Balanced?

- A group of states working together to develop high-quality, computer-adaptive assessments that measure college and career readiness in both math and English language arts.

before. It is time spent reading complex text, writing essays, and explaining reasoning, which are essential skills to master and to practice.

- On average, students currently spend more time on district benchmark assessments than state tests. Since these tests assess a wider range of skills and provide better information, they have the potential to eliminate many of the district assessments, reducing the overall time students spend testing.

10. Do students need to be computer literate?

- Students do need to be computer literate. Missouri students already have experience with online testing. Since 2008, Missouri's high school end-of-course assessments have been administered online. This year, for the first time, grade-level assessments will also be computer-based, so all students will need to be computer literate.
- Our students need to be using computers regularly, so they gain the computer skills they need for college and the workplace. Computer-based tests are an opportunity for us to make sure all schools have their technology up to speed, not only for testing, but also for use of learning tools.
- The Smarter Balanced tests are computer adaptive, adjusting to a student's demonstrated level of understanding. Selecting the difficulty of upcoming questions based on previous answers allows for a more precise measure of student achievement.
- Paper-based test versions will be available for the first three years for any schools that have difficulty meeting the technology requirements.

11. Where can I go for more information?

- www.smarterbalanced.org
- www.missourilearningstandards.com
- www.BusinessForCore.org