

A BIG WIN FOR OHIO STUDENTS

Ohio's New Learning Standards



In 2010, the Ohio State Board of Education adopted a new set of college- and career-ready standards to ensure that our children are prepared for success in college, careers, and life. These standards are more challenging and establish clear expectations for what students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school.

Prior to adopting Ohio's New Learning Standards, the state's academic standards were not sufficient to prepare our students for success. The previous standards received a D on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's 2007 *Leaders and Laggards* report for lack of rigor and a C in college and workforce preparation. Ohio's standards at that time were too broad and vague, and didn't prioritize the skills most important for students. According to the Fordham Institute, the English language arts standards were missing 35% of the most critical reading and writing skills. Although 70% to 80% of Ohio's fourth and eighth grade students were proficient on the Ohio Achievement Assessment in both math and reading, less than half reached proficiency on the Nation's Report Card (also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP) in the same years, as seen in the table above. This lack of preparedness follows students after they graduate from high school. In 2012, 40% of full-time freshmen enrolled at Ohio public universities had to take a remedial reading or math course because they lacked the skills to complete college-level work.¹

Ohio's Proficiency Results on the Nation's Report Card (NAEP)

Year	4th Math	4th Reading	8th Math	8th Reading
2011	45%	34%	39%	37%
2013	48%	37%	40%	39%

Thanks to the more challenging New Learning Standards, Ohioans are one step closer to ensuring that students will have the opportunity to reach their full potential. By 2020, 59% of jobs in Ohio will require a postsecondary credential. However, only 36% of adults in the state currently have this credential, resulting in a 23% skills gap. By raising the bar, we can be confident that Ohio students will be prepared to fill these jobs and contribute to the growth of our economy. In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, Ohio has set its new standards at a level to help ensure our students succeed after high school, whatever path they choose.

1. Ohio Board of Regents. 2013 *Status of Ohio Graduates Remediation Report by District*, December 2013. https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/data/hs_transition/--2013-Ohio-Remediation-Report.pdf.



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Better Standards Deserve Better Assessments

For the last four years, teachers across Ohio have been hard at work implementing these standards. It has been a significant undertaking involving countless hours of professional development to align curricula, instructional materials, and learning strategies to engage students more deeply in the classroom.

The next phase of this work is to implement an improved test in Ohio that is more meaningful to students, teachers, and parents in determining which skills a student has or has not mastered in order to be prepared to succeed. We need a test that can measure the critical thinking and problem-solving skills that parents, teachers, business leaders, and higher education leaders have said our students need in order to be successful—and truly measure if a student is able to apply what they have learned. Our existing state tests cannot evaluate this level of learning, and improved assessments present an opportunity to move beyond “bubble tests” that simply measure rote memorization skills.

Improved assessments need to be part of a larger system of accountability that supports student achievement and holds our schools accountable for successfully teaching the content outlined in the standards. At the heart of accountability is the need to ensure that all students across Ohio are receiving the same high-quality education. Meaningful tests serve as school-wide checkups that can identify struggling students and schools in need of extra support so interventions can be put in place to better support students and teachers. In addition, improved assessments can identify high-achieving students who require support to maintain their academic engagement and provide them with the resources they need to continue to excel.

During this time of transition, it is important to advocate for the key criteria that will make Ohio’s test a strong measuring stick of how our students are doing on the path to college and careers. The updated state test should not only accurately measure college and career readiness, but it should also possess the requisite elements of a quality, aligned assessment system to make it a useful tool.

What Does a High-Quality Assessment System Look Like?

A high-quality assessment system:

- Is a comprehensive testing system consisting of a summative state test that can be paired with local formative or interim tests.
- Uses only tests that are developed with input from and reviewed by academic and testing experts, and—most importantly—teachers.
- Is piloted and field-tested before full implementation.
- Assesses a wide range of real-world skills and content knowledge using a variety of question formats.
- Provides detailed, timely, and easy-to-understand feedback that can be used as an early warning signal so that effective interventions can be put in place to benefit students and teachers.
- Is comparable to other states’ assessment systems so that students who move from one state to another are held to the same standards of performance and have a smooth transition.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why do we have state tests?

- State tests are part of a larger system of accountability that supports student achievement and holds our schools accountable for preparing students for the future. We need state tests to serve as school- and district-wide academic checkups to identify achievement gaps early on so interventions can be put in place, ensuring all of our students receive a high-quality education.

2. What is the difference between 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. Standards provide the foundation for key components of the education system, including curricula, instructional materials, teacher training, and assessments.
- A curriculum is the course of study covering the standards. It is set by local school districts and includes the lesson plans, programs, and textbooks that teachers use to teach the content and skills outlined in the standards.

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

- Although teachers use different materials and curricula, students are still learning the same skills outlined in the standards. Teachers determine how best to teach their students. Because the updated tests prioritize assessing skills over rote memorization, teachers can be creative in their lessons while still addressing the standards and preparing students for the test.

4. What is the current situation around testing both nationally and in Ohio?

- In 2010, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium were created by multi-state consortia. These groups are working to create two aligned testing options that aim to accurately measure students' progress toward college and career readiness, assess a wide range of skills, and provide useful information to improve student learning. The tests were field-tested this past spring in 35 states (including Ohio) and Washington, D.C.



Why Support Ohio's New Learning Standards?

- They are more challenging than Ohio's old standards and will better prepare our students for success.
- They focus on critical thinking, problem-solving, and writing skills that were missing from our previous standards.
- They provide clarity to teachers by identifying the critical skills and essential knowledge students need to master.

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.

- Ohio has been a member of PARCC since 2011. PARCC is a consortium of states working together to create updated computer-based assessments that will measure whether a student is on track to graduate high school prepared for college and the workforce.
- There is proposed legislation (H.B. 597) to repeal the standards, which could threaten the use of the aligned assessments as well.

5. What test will replace Ohio's existing assessments?

- PARCC replaces the Ohio Achievement Assessment for grades 4–8 in math and ELA and for grade 3 in math only. Third graders will continue to take the Ohio Achievement Assessment in reading.

6. How will test scores impact teachers in Ohio?

- Student performance measures (which include state test scores if a teacher instructs a course that requires testing, such as math) will count for 42.5% of a teacher's evaluation this school year and are only one piece of the total evaluation. Teacher observations and other subjective measures (such as surveys and portfolios) are also used. Beginning next school year (2015–2016), districts will choose the weight of student performance measures, which can range from 42.5% to 50%.

7. What kind of professional development did teachers receive in preparation for the standards and the new test?

- Teachers began receiving training on the new standards and assessments in 2011. Ohio had a group of education leaders that worked with the state department of education to provide support as they transitioned to the standards. Teams of teachers then gathered to develop instructional strategies and resources aligned to the standards. All of the materials developed became available on the Ohio Department of Education website to be used as a guideline for other teachers across the state.

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

- The federal government can only collect aggregate-level student data, and the state is prohibited from reporting information that would make it possible to identify an individual student. *By Ohio law, any information linking students to their educational data cannot be shared or released to anyone without parental consent.* Ohio has some of the most stringent student data protection laws in the country (which were reaffirmed in H.B. 487). Ohio's New Learning Standards do not change how the data is collected or shared.

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

- As members of the Education Leader Cadre, Ohio teachers spent a total of 50,000 hours developing and reviewing PARCC test items and reading passages. They also reviewed PARCC state-developed instructional materials and have become active leaders in state and local implementation.

10. Why will the new test take longer than the previous state test?

- The new assessments measure higher level skills, so they involve multi-step tasks that take students longer to complete. On average, students currently spend more time on local or district benchmark assessments than state tests. Since the new tests assess a wider range of skills and provide better information, they have the potential to eliminate some local assessments, reducing the overall time students spend testing.
- These tests are of much higher quality, so the time invested will provide parents and educators with more detailed and useful information on student progress than ever before. It is time spent reading complex text, writing essays, and explaining their reasoning, which are essential skills to master and practice.

11. Do students need to be computer literate?

- Our students need to be engaging with technology regularly in the classroom so they gain the technology skills necessary for college and the workplace. Computer-based tests are an opportunity to ensure all of our schools have appropriate internet capabilities not only for testing, but also for technology-based learning tools. While it may take some time to ensure that every school has the hardware necessary and meets the technology requirements, this is a smart investment. Technology is not going away. Ensuring that all students, regardless of geography or household income, have equal access to technology is critical to preparing students for a 21st century competitive workforce.
- Paper-based tests will be available for schools that are not yet ready for the technology, but the goal is for all students to benefit from computer-enhanced features.
- Other assessments are following suit to transition to computer-based tests. For example, in spring 2015 the ACT will launch their digital test version and NAEP will follow in 2017.

12. Where can I go for more information?

- www.education.ohio.gov/Topics/Testing
- www.education.ohio.gov/Topics/Ohio-s-New-Learning-Standards
- www.parcconline.org
- www.BusinessForCore.org