

## Minnesota's Statewide Assessments

*The 2015 and 2016 Legislatures amended the law on statewide tests*

The 2015 and 2016 Legislatures revised Minnesota's existing law on statewide testing. Beginning in the 2015-2016 school year, statewide testing requirements for many students are as follows:

- **Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs):** Public school students in grades 3 through 8 must take statewide computer-adaptive MCAs online that include on-grade-level test items and may include off-grade-level test items, depending on students' responses to the test questions; students in grade 10 take the reading MCA and students in grade 11 take the math MCA; students in grade 9 must take a statewide writing test when it becomes available
- **College entrance exams:** To the extent state funding is available, districts must pay the cost, one time, for students in grade 11 or 12 to take a nationally normed college entrance exam at the student's high school during the school day; students are no longer required to take a nationally normed college entrance exam to graduate from high school
- **Career and college readiness:** Students remain subject to career and college readiness expectations but are no longer required to take a series of career and college readiness assessments that are predictive of a nationally normed, college readiness assessment
- **Graduation assessments:** Students are not required to achieve a specified score or level of proficiency on any statewide assessments in order to graduate from high school
- **Assessments for students with special needs:** Students with an individualized education program may satisfy state assessment requirements by taking state-identified alternative assessments; additionally, the education commissioner must include accommodations or provide alternative assessments for English learners

The 2015 changes in the law applied to students enrolled in grade 8 in the 2012-2013 school year or later, which was most students entering grade 11 in the 2015-2016 school year. Students enrolled in grade 8 in the 2011-2012, 2010-2011, or an earlier school year are subject to transitional assessment requirements.

*Students remain subject to career and college readiness expectations*

Districts and schools annually must help students, beginning no later than grade 9, and their families prepare for postsecondary education and a career. Districts and schools also must help these students and their parents develop, review, and revise an individualized plan for postsecondary education or a career. Underlying the planning process are career and college-ready benchmarks that inform students and

their parents and teachers about what knowledge and skills the students must learn and how well the students must perform to have a reasonable chance to succeed in a career or college without need for postsecondary remediation.

The education commissioner, in consultation with the chancellor of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), must establish empirically derived benchmarks on the high school reading and math tests to show a trajectory toward career and college readiness. Students who receive a college-ready ACT or SAT score or meet a career and college-ready MCA benchmark are not required to take a remedial noncredit course at a MnSCU institution in the corresponding subject area. Students through grade 12 must continue to participate in targeted instruction, intervention, and remediation, as appropriate.

Schools and districts must encourage students in grades 11 or 12 who are identified as academically ready for a career or college to participate in dual credit courses and programs.

***ABE and EL students must be informed about targeted interventions***

The education commissioner and the MnSCU chancellor also must collaborate in aligning instruction and assessments to give adult basic education (ABE) students and English learners (EL) diagnostic information about the targeted interventions they need to seek postsecondary education or employment without need for postsecondary remediation.

***Districts must limit the amount of local testing***

School districts and charter schools must limit any additional local testing to ten hours per school year for students in grades 1 to 6 and 11 hours per school year for students in grades 7 to 12, excluding Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams, unless the district and its teachers agree to exceed the limit and include that information in the district's World's Best Workforce Report.

Before the start of the school year, districts and charter schools must publish on their official website a comprehensive standardized testing calendar for the school year and the rationale for administering each assessment, and indicate whether the test is a local option or required under state or federal law.

***MDE must develop a list of special circumstances and an opt-out form for parents***

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) must develop a list of circumstances under which a student may be unable to be tested. These circumstances include transferring from another state or from a nonpublic school, or hospitalization, among other circumstances. The MDE commissioner must publish a form for parents to complete if they refuse to have their student participate in state or local standardized testing.

For an overview of the Minnesota assessment system see the Statewide Testing page on the MDE website, <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/fam/tests/index.htm>.

**For more information:** Contact legislative analyst Lisa Larson at 651-296-8036.

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