

Standardized Testing

Throughout their education, students will take selected standardized tests. A standardized test is one that is administered under uniform and controlled conditions. This ensures that any difference in scores (pre- and post-results, between students, etc.) reflect differences in knowledge and skills, rather than differences in unrelated factors such as test conditions. These tests are one of many ways educators assess what students know and can do. This can include paper-based or computer-based testing, oral and written tasks, classroom observations and portfolios of student work. These measures are used to monitor progress, refine instructional practices and improve our capacity to ensure that all students reach and exceed grade level expectations and graduate from the Worcester Public Schools career and/or college ready. Students whose parents opt them out of state or district standardized assessments will not be academically penalized or face disciplinary action except as prohibited by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or by the United States.

District Testing

Standardized instruments commonly used in the district include:

- *Early Screening Inventory (ESI-R; K): a brief developmental screening instrument designed to be individually administered to children entering kindergarten*
- *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS NEXT; K-1): individually-administered fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills. The instrument is generally used in kindergarten, but may be administered to students in other grades.*
- *Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (Benchmark; K-8): a formative assessment that measures decoding, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills. This instrument may be administered to students in kindergarten through 8th grade, but is predominantly used in grades 1 and 2*
- *Measures of Academic Progress (MAP): adaptive computer-based tests in mathematics and reading administered in a group setting*
 - *Goal areas in Reading: (1) Literature; (2) Informational Text; (3) Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*
 - *Goal areas in Mathematics:*
 - *Grades 2-5: (1) Geometry; (2) Measurement and Data; (3) Number and Operations; (4) Operations and Algebraic Thinking*
 - *Grades 6+: (1) Geometry; (2) Operations and Algebraic Thinking; (3) Statistics and Probability; (4) Real and Complex Number Systems*

Schools may also administer additional common-assessments (i.e. those used across a given grade in a given school or across the district). The use of common instruments across schools supports the application of consistent high standards and learning targets throughout the district. This also ensures that a common set of data is available for all students should a student change schools.

State Testing

Students must also participate in state assessments as required by the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 and the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Students in Grades 3-8 and 10 are required to be tested in English Language Arts and Mathematics. During the spring of 2017-18, the state will be administering the “next-generation” MCAS assessment for students in grades 3-8, as was done in 2016-17. Grades 4, 5, 7 and 8 are expected to be participating in online testing, while all other grades will take a paper-pencil version. It is expected that the state will transition to computer-based testing in all grades, 3 through 10, by the Spring of 2019. The reader should consult the Massachusetts Department of Education web site for the most recent information: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/Assess/>.

As in previous years, MCAS tests will continue to be administered in Science and Technology/Engineering (Grades 5, 8, 9-12) in 2017-18. High school tests administered in grades 9-12 include biology, chemistry, introductory physics, and technology/engineering.

In addition, a small number of students “with the most significant disabilities who are unable to take the standard MCAS tests even with accommodations” may participate in the MCAS Alternative Assessment (Grades 3-10) in lieu of regular MCAS assessments. The MCAS Alternative Assessment consists of a portfolio of materials collected by the teacher and student, including work samples, instructional data, videotapes and other supporting information.

Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs)

ACCESS for ELLs will be administered to kindergarten through 12th graders who have been identified as English language learners (ELLs). Results will be used to monitor students’ progress in acquiring academic English. Scores are reported for each of the four language domains (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) and in several composite scores (Oral Language, Literacy, Comprehension, Overall Proficiency).

Testing Accommodations

Students with IEP or 504 plans may receive test accommodation(s) during testing. A test accommodation is a change in the way a test is administered or in the way a student responds to testing. Test accommodations are intended to offset the effects of a disability that may prevent student access to test content and are used to ensure that all students have the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills on statewide assessments.

Additional High School Tests

To monitor student progress toward career and college readiness, students may also participate in the following in grades 9–12:

Advanced Placement (AP) Exams (AP exams - Grades 9-12) are end-of-year assessments that students may complete as part of the Advanced Placement program. Assessment formats will vary by subject and may include multiple choice items, free response items or require a student to put together a portfolio of their work. Students who earn qualifying scores (generally 3 or above, though actual qualifying scores can vary by subject and higher education institution) may have an opportunity to earn college-level credit.

Preliminary SAT (PSAT – Grades 10-11) is offered to all grade 10 and 11 students in the Worcester Public Schools at no cost, though students may also take this test in grade 11. The PSAT is a paper-based test and is used to prepare students for the SAT, enter competitions for scholarships (e.g. National Merit Scholarship), and assess their academic skills necessary for college-level work. Assessed skills include reading, math reasoning, critical thinking and writing.

SAT (Grades 11-12) is a paper-based standardized college entrance test to help colleges and universities identify potential candidates for admission and to connect students with educational opportunities beyond high school. Three scores in critical reading, mathematics, and writing are reported on a 200 to 800 point scale.

SAT Subject Tests (Grades 11-12) are taken by students to demonstrate to colleges their mastery of specific subjects such as English, history, mathematics, science, and foreign languages. Content of each test is not based on any one approach or curriculum but rather evolves to reflect current trends in high school course work.

Accuplacer is a suite of computer adaptive assessments offered by local higher education institutions that provide information about a test taker's academic skills to determine if they would benefit from developmental classes before beginning college level work. Students in the Worcester Public Schools may be asked to complete Accuplacer tests to be eligible for dual enrollment in local higher education institutions.