

Testing Words

Academic Standards

Statements of the subject-specific knowledge and skills that schools are expected to teach students.

ACCESS for ELLs

ACCESS for ELLs is a large-scale assessment of English language proficiency based on the Minnesota Standards for English Language Development, developed by the WIDA Consortium. There are four language domains addressed by the ACCESS for ELLs: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Accommodations

Changes in the way that a test is administered which reduce or eliminate the effects of a disability; they are used for equity, not advantage. Accommodations are only available to students with an IEP or 504 plan. All needed accommodations are documented annually in the IEP prior to testing. Likewise, a 504 plan team should document its decision to provide an accommodation in the 504 plan. See Linguistic Support.

Accountability

A provision of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) legislation that includes three main areas: prioritizing schools for support, publicly reporting data, and recognizing schools for success.

Achievement Level

A performance category defined by a range of scores on a test. Minnesota has four achievement levels on the standards-based accountability assessments (MCA): Does Not Meet Standards, Partially Meets Standards, Meets Standards and Exceeds Standards. Also called Performance Level.

Achievement Level Descriptor (ALD)

A description of what a student can typically do when the student's score on a test falls within one of the four achievement levels: Does Not Meet the Standards, Partially Meets the Standards, Meets the Standards, and Exceeds the Standards.

Alignment

Alignment procedures examine the agreement or match between educational components such as test items and the Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards. To the extent that test items are aligned with these standards, student performance on one can be considered a measure of the other.

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs

Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is an individually administered English language proficiency assessment developed specifically for English learners who have significant cognitive disabilities severe enough to prevent meaningful participation in the ACCESS for ELLs assessment. There are four language domains addressed by the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Only students meeting the participation guidelines are eligible to take this assessment.

Benchmark

Specific statement of knowledge or skill within an academic standard. The specific skills that fit under a learning strand or academic standard.

Bias Review

Advisory panel that reviews the language of passages, storyboards, and test items for Minnesota students by considering bias, fairness, and sensitivity issues, including the following: stereotyping, gender bias, regional or geographic bias (including language bias issues), ethnic or cultural bias, religious bias, ageism, bias against persons with disabilities, and experiential bias.

Career and College Readiness (CCR)

For high school Reading and Mathematics MCA, CCR is a graphical representation of a student's "progress" score compared to the CCR Goal Score. CCR Goal Scores are identified by directly linking scale scores on these tests to scores on the corresponding subject-level subtests from a nationally recognized college entrance exam. At each grade, CCR Goal Scores are indicators that performance is on track to demonstrate career and college readiness on a college entrance exam at the end of grade 11. A high school student's MCA scale score for a subject is on the same scale as the CCR Goal Score for that subject and can be interpreted for performance comparison. If a student's MCA scale score is at or above the CCR Goal Score, he or she is expected to be able to successfully complete credit-bearing coursework at a two- or four-year college or university or other credit-bearing post-secondary program without any need for remediation. Student scores below the CCR Goal Score may indicate that the student's performance is not on track to meet career and college readiness, and the student may benefit from remediation. CCR Goal Scores are not reported for science.

Cut Score

Specified point on a score scale that separates achievement levels and is usually established by Minnesota's Commissioner of Education after receiving a recommendation from a Standard Setting advisory panel.

DAC (District Assessment Coordinator)

District's main contact with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the service providers concerning all statewide assess.

Data Center

The Data Center located at the MDE website was designed to provide parents, educators, schools, districts, and citizens with easy access to test results, revenue and expenditure data, demographic information, and other critical data in a centralized location. See Mobile Analytics.

Data Review

Advisory panel that reviews the preliminary response data from field tests. Panelists review such performance parameters as difficulty level, performance by different groups of students, and other trends and patterns.

DRC (Data Recognition Corporation)

WIDA has subcontracted with DRC to support administration of the ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs.

DSR/SSR (District or School Student Results) files

Large data files downloaded from Assessment Secure Reports on the MDE website that contains all student-level data from the assessments, including demographic information, achievement level information, and various test scores.

Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLDS)

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLDS) is an innovative tool that combines birth through 12th grade data collected by the Minnesota Departments of Education, Human Services, and Health into one database. ECLDS provides reports built upon policy questions and research on child development.

EL (English Learner)

Programmatic and research term used to identify students learning English as an additional language. May also appear as ELL – English Language Learner or LEP – Limited English Proficient.

Electronic Review

Advisory panel that evaluates the appropriateness of the media developed for online assessments. The panelists review the final stage of the scenarios and items developed prior to field-testing and verify the media's accessibility, accuracy, and universal design characteristics.

ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act)

The federal law passed in 2015 that requires all states to give reading and mathematics tests to students in grades 3–8 and once in high school.

ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act)

The federal law signed in December, 2015 which replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and changed many portions of ESEA. ESSA still requires all states administer annual statewide assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics in grades 3–8 and once in high school, as well as assessments once in each grade span in science for all students and annual English language proficiency assessments in grades K–12 for all English learners. ESSA is also the source of federal requirements for school accountability, which Minnesota's North Star accountability system meets.

Field Test

Test items and writing prompts must be tested in order to be considered valid for use in operational scoring and are tested on field tests, either stand-alone or embedded. Field-testing yields a set of item statistics that describe how well the item or prompt functions. Items that pass Data Review are stored in the item bank for future use in constructing operational test forms.

Goal Progress Score

Goal Progress Scores are indicators that performance in each MCA subject is on track to demonstrate career and college readiness on a college entrance exam by the end of grade 11. The Student

Progress Score is compared to Goal Progress Scores at each grade for which testing data are available. Grade 8 Goal Progress Scores are identified by linking the Grade 8 Progress Scores to those on a nationally recognized “pre-college” entrance exam that is predictive of performance on the nationally recognized college entrance exam used for the high school tests. The Goal Progress Scores of the lower grade MCA tests are established by MDE linking scores on those assessments to scores on the next higher grade’s MCA. For grades 3–8, a student who has a Progress Score at or above the Goal Progress Score is expected to be on track to meet grade-level expectations in the next grade’s coursework. A student who has a Progress Score below or near the Goal Progress Score may not be on track to meet grade-level expectations in the next grade’s coursework and may benefit from additional instruction. See also Student Progress Score and Career and College Readiness (CCR).

Growth

A student’s growth is derived by comparing the MCA score for this year to his or her MCA score from the previous year. Expected growth is determined by comparing the student’s MCA score this year to the scores achieved this year by Minnesota students who had the same score as the student the previous year. Scores in the vicinity of this year’s expected score reflect Average Growth. Scores that are substantially lower or higher than expectations reflect Low Growth or High Growth, respectively. NOTE: Growth is not calculated for science.

IEP (Individualized Education Program)

Official educational document that may specify a special testing condition (accommodation) for a student taking an ESEA-related test. For eligible students, the IEP may specify an alternate assessment.

ISRs (Individual Student Reports)

These reports describe an individual student’s performance in terms of overall results, performance level, and Minnesota Academic Standards for each subject.

Item

Test question. Examples of formats are multiple choice and technology enhanced.

Item Analysis

Statistical analysis providing measurement and bias information about items. This information is used for data review panels, test construction, technical reports, and other psychometric documentation. The item and distractor analysis report provides information on the number and percentage of students responding to each answer choice, as well as other statistics such as p-value, point biserial correlation.

Item Bank

Collection of test items in various stages of review, along with associated data (for example, reading passages, distracter rationales), and item statistics.

Item Difficulty

Proportion of students who correctly answered the item.

Item Review

After receiving training on item development, members of the Item Review panel help choose appropriate items for future tests.

Item Samplers

Intended to familiarize students and educators with the general functionality of the online test, including navigation, tools, and test item types. The student tutorial is available only for the online MCA. Not suitable for predicting how students will perform on the corresponding assessment.

Item Specifications

Specify the language and format item writers must follow when constructing items.

Large-Scale Assessment

Statewide, standardized testing for thousands of students. A test that measure student knowledge and skills against predetermined standards set by a large political or policy group. An assessment that is summative, measuring what students know at a particular date. Its focus is on judging student performance against a clear set of criteria. A large-scale assessment is different from classroom-based assessment, which judges student performance in a standards-based curriculum as well as the student's attitude, effort, and performance (status and growth) on teacher-determined goals.

Learning Locator Access Code

The access code is unique for each student and subject. The code provides access to a website featuring customized learning resources.

Lexile® Measure

The predicted Lexile measure of the student's reading ability, and the upper and lower range that helps match the student with literature appropriate for his or her reading skills. Available for Reading MCA only.

Linguistic Support

Linguistic supports are available for students who are identified as EL in MARSS. Because they are in the process of acquiring English, English learners are eligible to receive linguistic supports that enable them to demonstrate what they know and can do to meet academic content standards in reading, mathematics, and science. These supports are different from the supports that are available to all students because they address the unique linguistic needs of English learners. See Accommodations.

Longitudinal Reports

Longitudinal Reports include historical test results in a graphical display at the student, school, district, and/or state level for review or comparison by administration (test and year). Comparisons include overall and average scale score, achievement level, strand performance detail, and/or student group. A Dashboard view will display performance comparisons across all tests, as they apply to the administration being reported, in a summary graph for a side by side comparison. Longitudinal reports are available in PearsonAccess Next.

MARSS WES (Minnesota Automated Reporting Student Systems Web Edit System)

MDE web system where districts submit student enrollment information. Student data from MARSS are used to provide information to service providers through precode files and verify enrollment for accountability.

MDE-ORG (Minnesota Department of Education-Organization Reference Glossary)

A searchable database on the MDE website that includes a variety of Minnesota school, district, and education-related organization directories, including district and school addresses, contacts, and historical data.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA)

The Reading, Mathematics, and Science MCA are administered online, with paper accommodated test materials available only for eligible students. Students take the applicable assessments for their grade, and the scores are used for final reports and accountability. The MCA measures achievement towards meeting the Minnesota Academic Standards.

Minnesota Report Card

The Minnesota Report Card provides information about districts and schools. This interactive tool is designed to provide parents, educators, schools, districts and citizens with easy access to district and school information, such as test results, demographic information and more.

Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS)

A performance-based alternate assessment in reading, mathematics, and science for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. It is based on alternate achievement standards aligned to extensions of the Minnesota Academic Standards, representing a reduction of the breadth and depth of the standards. Only students meeting the eligibility requirements are eligible to take this assessment.

Mobile Analytics

Mobile Analytics refers to the mobile capabilities of these reports. These reports are designed to be viewed on any mobile device without restrictions. The Minnesota Report Card, Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLDS), and Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDs) are all part of the Data Center's mobile analytics.

Multiple-Choice Item

Item with answer options provided.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Sometimes called the Nation's Report Card, these tests are given to some students in a sample of districts to measure the performance of Minnesota students on national academic standards.

New Item Review

Advisory panel that reviews test items that may be used on future assessments to verify that content, readability, and grade appropriateness are within an acceptable level for the given grade, as well as offering suggestions for revisions to the items. All applicable item formats are reviewed during the course of this panel.

Norm-Referenced Test (NRT)

Achievement tests that describe a student's performance in terms of the student's relative position in a group (for example, the 80th percentile means that the student scored better than 80 percent of his or her classmates). NRTs are usually standardized tests offered by commercial test publishers.

North Star

The North Star accountability system is Minnesota's system for school and district accountability. It uses several indicators, arranged into three stages, to satisfy federal requirements under ESSA and state requirements under World's Best Workforce (WBWF) that the state have a system to prioritize schools and districts for support. Schools are prioritized for one of three levels of support – comprehensive support, targeted support, or support – in response to ESSA, and districts are prioritized for support in response to WBWF.

North Star also includes the processes for recognizing schools and districts for success. Recognition is based on a growing number of indicators, including some of those used to prioritize schools and districts for support.

On-Demand Reports

On-demand reports are preliminary test results that are available within 60 minutes after testing or data entry is completed. On-Demand reports are available for all online assessments and for student responses in paper accommodated test materials that are entered online. On-demand reports are available in PearsonAccess Next.

Operational Test

Test administered annually to all eligible students. All passages and items on the test have been developed, field-tested, and reviewed by Minnesota teachers. This is sometimes called the "live administration" as opposed to a field or pilot test.

Passage Review

Advisory panel that reviews fiction, nonfiction, and poetry for the reading test. Panelists approve or reject passages based on subject, content, student interest, and universal appeal. Panelists consider the passage length, grade-level appropriateness, and gender representation, as well as the portrayal of cross-cultural and cross-generational elements, within the texts.

PearsonAccess Next

Minnesota uses PearsonAccess Next for administration of MCA and MTAS. The secure part of PearsonAccess Next allows users to create and manage users, set up and monitor online test sessions, and access test results. All district and school staff are able to access resources for preparing students for testing, including the Student Tutorial and Item Samplers, guides and manual, as well as training resources from PearsonAccess Next.

Performance Assessment

Assessment requiring students to produce rather than select a response. Responses typically must be hand scored.

Performance Levels

Sections of a scale score continuum created by cut scores. See Achievement Level.

Perspective

Pearson's Perspective website provides districts and families with educational and instructional resources. Learning Locator codes are provided on reports and these codes can be entered into Perspective to access resources aligned to student achievement levels.

Precode

The files that are sent to the testing service providers with student enrollment and demographic information and test eligibility.

Proficiency

Level of knowledge or skills that demonstrates a mastery level of achievement. For standards-based accountability assessments, a student who earns an achievement level of meets or exceeds the standards is considered proficient on the Minnesota Academic Standards. For ACCESS for ELLs, a student is considered proficient in English when they achieve a composite proficiency level of 4.5 and at least three of four domains at 3.5 or higher in the four domains of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Psychometrics

Branch of psychology that deals with the design, administration, and interpretation of quantitative tests measuring psychological variables such as intelligence, aptitude, and personality traits. Also the process where a student's achievement is measured and a score is assigned.

Raw Scores

Scores obtained directly from student responses. The raw score is the sum of points assigned to a student's constructed-responses, technology-enhanced responses, and the sum of correct answers to multiple-choice questions or a total of both types of responses. Usually transformed to another scale for reporting purposes.

Raw-to-Scale Score Conversion

When a Minnesota assessment is administered many times a year or to students in the same grade across years, a constant scale is necessary to maintain comparability of scores. To ensure equivalency of scores across years for these assessments, raw scores are converted to scale scores through a linear transformation of estimated latent traits (construct). Through this process, called test score equating, equivalency of test forms is maintained and fair comparisons are ensured.

Reliability

The extent to which test scores are reproducible. If a class of students theoretically took the same test twice in one day and each student's score was the same on the second administration of the test as on the first, the test would be perfectly reliable (1.00). Of course, perfection is not possible, and reliabilities in the .90s are considered good.

Scale Score

A scale score is a conversion of a student's score that equalizes possible differences in test form difficulty.

School Assessment Coordinator

The person in the school with a variety of responsibilities related to the administration of statewide assessments.

Scenario

A concept used in the Science MCA to assess both science content and skills. Items within a scenario are related by common context to give students the opportunity to consider science content at a higher cognitive level and in a more efficient manner than would be possible with stand-alone items. Scenarios may include graphics, audio, and/or video media. Some scenarios may include a simulative portion that requires students to manipulate variables and then view the results of a simulated situation. In the situation, students may complete an investigation, collect, record, and analyze data or influence the outcome of an event or phenomenon.

Secure Reports

Secure Reports is where districts can view assessment results for students, schools, and the district as well as accountability and school improvement reports.

Secure Test Materials

State tests should be seen only by the students who take them and the professional team that develops them. Test items and test content are not to be viewed by teachers and Test Monitors who administer them or by parents or the public in general, including the media.

Standards

Statements of the subject-specific knowledge and skills schools are expected to teach students.

Performance Standards

A general level of performance operationally defined by cut scores, labeled by descriptive terms (for example, proficient), and often accompanied by examples of typical work.

Standard Deviation

Measure of variability, expressed in the same metric as the score. Indicates the dispersion of test scores around the mean. The mean and standard deviation of a distribution can be used to determine what proportion of scores falls within one standard deviation of the mean.

Standard Setting

Advisory panel that is trained to assign the standards or Minnesota achievement levels in statewide assessments. Panel members learn the process Minnesota uses for establishing standards and consider how various choices could affect students and schools.

Standardized Testing

Unlike tests made by the teacher and administered in a classroom setting, standardized testing provides a uniform and systematic way of designing, developing, implementing, administering, scoring,

and reporting test results. This systematic approach allows decision-makers, teachers, parents, and students to make comparisons across subjects (for example, Sally is better at mathematics than reading), across grades (for example, Joey has improved his mathematical ability from last year) and between schools and districts (for example, Middle School A reported higher reading scores than Middle School B).

Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System

Minnesota has developed the Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDs), matching student data from prekindergarten through completion of postsecondary education and into the workforce. By bridging existing data with other incoming data, a range of education program and delivery questions can be answered to gauge the effectiveness of current programs and design targeted improvement strategies to help students. For example, SLEDs brings together data from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and the Departments of Education, and Employment and Economic Development, to identify the most viable pathways for individuals in achieving successful outcomes in education and work.

Storyboard

Initial draft form of scenarios in the Science MCA assessment. Includes descriptions of the context and media or graphics to be used, as well as ideas or draft forms of rooted and summary items.

Storyboard Review

Advisory panel that evaluates the appropriateness of the scenarios for the Science MCA assessment. Panelists review storyboards prior to item and graphics development for the appropriateness of the content, grade level, length, gender representation, and geographic and ethnic inclusiveness.

Strands

The major divisions within each content area of the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards. The strand is the first level of detail describing the depth and breadth of the content area. Each strand has one or more standards that continues to describe that content area in more detail.

Student Response

Student's answer to a test question.

Support

Supports are features or practices available for all students that tailor the testing experience based on student needs or preferences. Supports include accessibility tools available in online assessments and general test-taking practices. See Accommodations.

Technical Manual

Includes the history of how the test was constructed and scored, including all the psychometric information. Updated annually after each test administration.

Technology-Enhanced Item

Item used in some online assessments. Students may select one or more points on a graphic, drag and drop a graphic from one location to another, or manipulate a graph.

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Website designed to help teachers harness that data by providing helpful ways to understand, interpret and ultimately use test data in the classrooms to inform instructional decisions.

Testlet

A passage and its set of items.

TestNav

Pearson delivers online tests to students using TestNav, which is accessed through an application (installable TestNav).

Test Development

Process of constructing a test. Includes writing the items or test questions and selecting and organizing them into test forms.

Test Specifications

The specific rules and characteristics guiding the development of a test. Adherence to test specifications ensures that equal test forms are developed annually. Test specifications refer to the overall characteristics of the test content and format that must be followed when constructing tests.

Test WES

MDE's Test WES system is the web edit system used throughout the year by District Assessment Coordinators and other district staff for these activities related to data editing and other assessment tasks.

Text-to-Speech

For online tests in Mathematics and Science, the audio component for standard and accommodated audio is text-to-speech. Text-to-speech provides computer-generated audio, and students select the parts of the item they want to listen to (e.g., question and answer options, selected text).

Training Management System

MDE uses [Pearson's Training Management System \(TMS\)](#) to provide many online trainings and webinars. To get started in the TMS, enter your email and select your district and school. Then select the tab that best describes your role in statewide testing, or the topic you want to learn more about.

Validity

The appropriateness or correctness of inferences, decisions, or descriptions made about individuals, groups, or institutions from test results. There is no such thing as a generically valid test. Validity must be considered in terms of the correctness of a particular inference.

WIDA

Minnesota is part of the WIDA Consortium. As a member of the WIDA consortium, Minnesota districts administer the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs assessment to all English learners in grades K–12. DRC is the service provider.

WIDA AMS (WIDA Assessment Management System)

WIDA AMS is used for setting up and administering online tests, ordering paper and accommodated test materials, and managing student data for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs and the WIDA Screener.