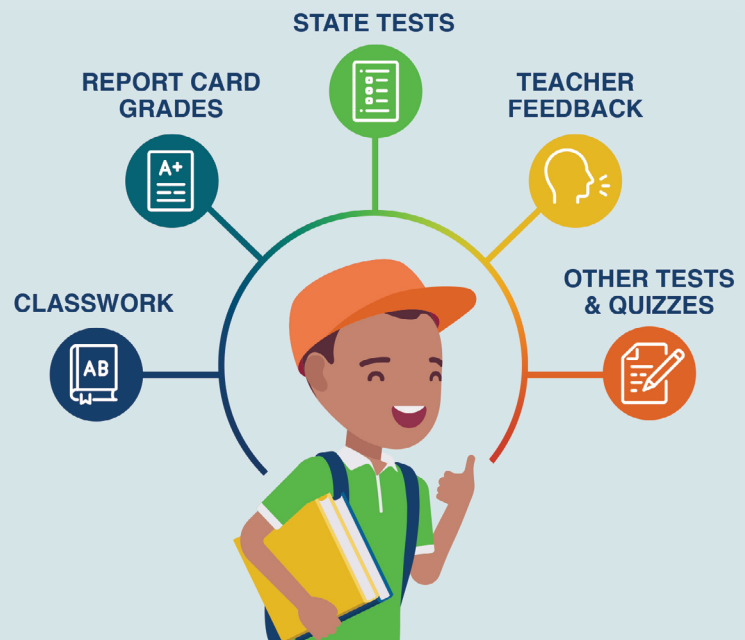




A FAMILY GUIDE TO ANNUAL STATE TESTS IN MISSISSIPPI: One of Many Measures of Student Learning

There are many ways to measure academic performance, and annual state tests are only one of them. These tests are not meant to tell the whole story. They are meant to be combined with other measures, including teacher feedback, classwork and projects, and report card grades. Together, these measures can give families a more complete picture of a student's performance so they can better support learning at home and advocate for their child.



State Assessments 101

The Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, requires students to take state tests in reading and math every year in third through eighth grade and once in high school. In Mississippi, students in third through eighth grade take the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) in English language arts and math. Students in fifth and eighth grade take the MAAP in science.

High school students take End-of-Course tests (EOCs) in 11th grade in Algebra 1, English 2, Biology and U.S. History. To earn a diploma, students must achieve a score in the “Passing” level (PL3) or higher on each of the EOCs. There are other options for students to demonstrate they have learned the material that include using the student's performance in the class and earning minimum scores on other tests.

Studies show that third grade is a critical year for students to learn fundamental reading skills that will help them understand and think critically about what they read. As a result, Mississippi requires all third grade students to score in the “Passing” level (PL3) or higher on the reading MAAP to move onto fourth grade. If a student does not score in the passing range, the school will create an Individual Reading Plan and provide additional support and interventions so the student can improve.

A Focus on Grade Level Skills

Unlike other tests, the MAAP is focused on grade level material and is aligned to the state standards. The test questions match what students do and learn in the classroom everyday throughout the year, which are the skills that are most important for students to learn in order to move on to more challenging content.

The MAAP test is taken on the computer. The test includes a variety of different types of questions, including traditional multiple choice, writing prompts and questions that ask students to create equations and explain their answer. Teachers have worked closely with the state to provide input into test questions.

Grade 6: Math

The ratio of boys to girls in a math class is 7:8. Which statement must be true about this math class?

- A The boys make up $\frac{7}{8}$ of the class
- B The girls make up $\frac{8}{15}$ of the class
- C There is exactly 1 more girl in the class
- D There are exactly 15 students in the class

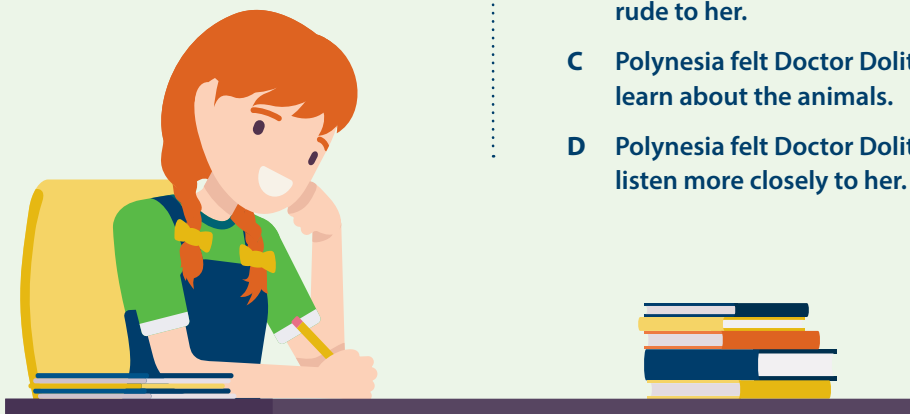
Grade 3: ELA

Read the sentence from paragraph 10.

“What would have been the good?” said Polynesia, dusting some cracker-crumbs off her left wing. “You wouldn’t have understood me if I had.”

What do the sentences show about how Polynesia felt about Doctor Dolittle at the beginning of the story?

- A Polynesia felt Doctor Dolittle was a smart doctor.
- B Polynesia felt Doctor Dolittle was being rude to her.
- C Polynesia felt Doctor Dolittle had a lot to learn about the animals.
- D Polynesia felt Doctor Dolittle needed to listen more closely to her.



Useful Information for All

FAMILIES: Understanding Grade Level Performance

The MAAP report gives families information on how their child performed on different sets of skills in each subject. Families can use this information to identify where their child is doing well and where they may need support or practice. This helps families better support learning at home. It can also help them start meaningful conversations with teachers, to set goals for each student's areas of improvement and to identify resources and strategies that can be used at home and in school to help students make progress.

Questions to Ask the Teacher about Your Child's MAAP Report:

- What does this mean about my child's learning?
- Is my child on grade level?
- Where does my child need more support or improvement?
- What short-term learning goals should my child meet to show progress?
- How can I support learning at home?



TEACHERS: Informing Instruction

Students take different types of tests throughout the school year. Some students take benchmark or diagnostic tests, such as MAP Growth, i-Ready or mCLASS. These are taken several times a year and measure mastery of important concepts and skills in reading and math. Students take a test at the beginning of the year to identify their “starting point” and again throughout the year to measure their progress. Benchmark tests help teachers identify and address learning gaps early on so students can stay on track to meet grade level expectations. While the MAAP is only given at the end of the school year, it is one way of showing how much progress students made from the beginning of the year and how well they met grade level expectations.

While teachers use MAAP results to understand each student's unique needs and support them in the areas where they need extra help, they also help teachers to improve their instruction. Teachers can use the results to look for trends in their students' learning to see what skills or concepts students learned and what content they struggled with. This helps teachers identify what they taught effectively and where they need to improve or change their instructional strategies.

SCHOOL & DISTRICT LEADERS: Informing Decisions

MAAP results are critical for school and district leaders to make informed decisions about schools and students. School and district level MAAP scores show leaders how students across a school or district are performing and indicate if a certain group of students or schools need more support. This allows them to target additional support or resources to help those schools improve. District leaders can also use state test scores to understand what strategies and changes are showing better outcomes for students.



STATE LEADERS: Helping Schools Improve

State leaders use MAAP results to identify schools and districts that need more support and resources. They identify the schools with the lowest performance in the state, as well as schools with certain groups of students that performed much lower on the test than the rest of the students in that school. These schools receive additional funding and resources from the state to support students and teachers. For example, schools may hire more teachers or tutors or they may purchase additional instructional materials and programs, depending on the needs of their students.

Where Can I Go for More Information?

- For more information, visit [MDEK12.org/OSA/MAAP/Parent-Resources](https://mdek12.org/OSA/MAAP/Parent-Resources)
- To see a practice test, visit [MS.NextEra.QuestArai.com/tds/#practice](https://ms.nextera.questarai.com/tds/#practice)
- For ideas on how to support your child's learning at home, visit [PTA.org/FamilyGuides](https://pta.org/FamilyGuides)
- For more information about the Mississippi PTA visit MissPTA.org/

