



PARCC Q&A

What is the “PARCC” test, or MCT3 and SATP3?

The PARCC assessments (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) replace the Mississippi Curriculum Test – 2nd edition (MCT2) for language arts and math for grades 3 through 8 and the Subject Area Testing Program – 2nd edition (SATP2) for Algebra I and English II. The PARCC tests are now referred to as MCT3 and SATP3.

Meanwhile, state tests for U.S. History and Biology I remain the same.

The MCT3 and SATP3 have two parts: A performance-based exam, given beginning in March, asks students to provide and explain their answers. The end-of-the-year exam, given before school is out, is multiple-choice.

The new assessments will measure what students have been learning. They will provide a more accurate picture of student knowledge than previous tests because they ask students to demonstrate and apply what they know instead of just picking the right answer from a multiple-choice question.

Why do we need new student assessments?

We need tests that will measure what our students are learning. The assessments are designed to measure real world skills. To be ready for college and careers, students need to apply their knowledge and skills in areas such as critical-thinking, analytical writing, and problem solving. New assessments have been specifically developed to measure these real-world skills that students will need when they graduate.

How much time do they take?

Students will spend 5 to 10 ¼ hours on statewide exams this year, depending on their grade level and type of test. On the former assessments, students spent 5 to 11 hours on exams.

The new tests are designed to measure problem-solving and critical thinking rather than basic skills. In addition, the tests provide writing assessments in all grades 3-11 whereas Mississippi previously only assessed writing in grades 4, 7, and 10.

Why do these assessments matter to parents?

The point of testing is to determine if students are learning and making progress in school. Parents should be able to know whether or not their children have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. The new assessments provide an academic checkup and help teachers and parents know whether students are on track to be college and career ready each step of the way.

How will students perform on the new assessments?

The assessments are new measures for student progress on the skills that matter for success. The Mississippi College- and Career-Ready Standards will improve student achievement over time. But, as with any change, there is a period of adjustment as teachers and students become familiar with the new assessment format. Lower test scores are expected, but those scores do not necessarily mean that schools are performing worse or that students are learning less. It means the tests have become more challenging and are measuring different skills.

Will the results of a child's tests be private?

Absolutely. Only the parents and school receive the results of an individual child's tests. Individual student scores will not be made public. They are not a part of student achievement data on report cards issued by districts and the state.

Can my child opt out of taking the test?

No. Statewide tests are a useful and valid tool that assist the Mississippi Department of Education and the Mississippi Board of Education in evaluating schools, school districts, and generally the progress that we are making in raising the level and quality of education across our state. Statewide testing is so important that it has actually been codified in state law. (MCA §§ 37-16-1, et seq.). Along with the MDE every school district in the state is required to “periodically assess student performance and achievement in each school.” (MCA § 37-16-5). In summary, student assessments are not an option, they are a requirement.

Does opting out affect schools?

Yes. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires participation of “all students” in statewide assessments. Schools have to demonstrate “adequate yearly progress” towards improving student achievement in reading, mathematics, and science.

Failure to participate jeopardizes the accreditation of schools and school districts. Additionally, school districts that fail to administer tests to at least 95% of students lose a letter grade under the current policy on school accountability and in accordance with state law.