

Why does Alaska give statewide summative assessments?

First, we want to be able to inform parents, educators, policy makers, the community, and businesses how our schools and districts are performing. Second, the information from the assessments can be used to help determine school improvement efforts. Third, we want to ensure there is equity in education for all students. The mission of the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development is to provide an excellent education to every student every day.

What are summative assessments?

A summative assessment is given at the end of an instructional period to measure how well students have learned the content. These statewide summative assessments in English language arts, mathematics, and science are given close to the end of the school year.

When are the assessments given to students?

The summative assessments, called the Alaska System of Academic Readiness, or AK STAR, and the Alaska Science Assessment are administered each spring. A test window calendar is available on the [General Assessment information webpage](https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/general-assessment-information) (<https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/general-assessment-information>).

How are Alaska educators involved in developing the assessments?

For the Alaska Science Assessment, educators participated in the development of achievement level descriptors and have participated in an item review. During the fall of 2021, Alaska educators helped develop the AK STAR achievement level descriptors. During the summer of 2022, DEED will be recruiting educators to participate in a process called standards setting to determine the scores for the ELA, mathematics, and science assessments.

What grades participate in the assessments?

The AK STAR assessments are administered to all students in grades 3-9 in English language arts and mathematics. The Alaska Science Assessment is administered to students in grades 5, 8, and 10.

I am a teacher. How can I prepare my students for the assessments? Can students study for the test?

The most effective way to prepare students for the assessments is to ensure that the Alaska English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards and the K-12 Science Standards for Alaska are being utilized in your instruction. Materials available on the [DEED Standards webpage](https://education.alaska.gov/standards) (education.alaska.gov/standards) include information regarding the format of the standards, tools that support effective strategies, as well as resources that help educators evaluate instructional materials. Student preparation resources are also available for educators to assist students in becoming familiar with the format of the assessments. For more information, please visit the [AK STAR Student Readiness webpage](https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/akstar/student-readiness) (education.alaska.gov/assessments/akstar/student-readiness) or the [Alaska Science Assessment Student Preparation webpage](https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/science/student-readiness) (education.alaska.gov/assessments/science/student-readiness).

I am a parent. How can I support my student in performing well on the assessments?

Be sure that your student has nourishment and a good night's sleep before the tests. Encourage your student to do his or her best on the test, but to understand that it will not affect his or her grades in the classroom.

What types of questions do the assessments have?

The summative tests will include a variety of item types, including traditional multiple choice, non-traditional multiple choice formats such as "choose all that apply," technology-enhanced and technology-enabled items such as plotting points on a graph or number line, selecting a response from a drop-down list, items with drag and drop functionality, or short constructed response.

Do students with disabilities and students who are English learners take this assessment?

Yes. These assessments are designed using a process called “universal design.” The goal of universal design is to maximize student access and allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the content. Specific accommodations for students with disabilities and students who are English learners are available. *A testing accommodation is a change made to ensure that information obtained from a test is an accurate reflection of what the test is intended to measure, rather than a measure of the student’s disability.*

What test-taking tools and accommodations are allowed on the assessments?

There are many universal features that are provided on computer-based assessments, such as highlighting, magnification, color overlay, color contrast, masking, etc., that are available to all students. Text-to-Speech (TTS) is an accommodation available to students with documented need. TTS is embedded in the test platform and allows students to start, stop, and replay computer audio what a student sees on the.

More information about test taking tools and allowable accommodations is available on the [DEED’s accommodations webpage](https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/accommodations) (<https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/accommodations>).

What kind of computers are used by students for the computer-based assessments?

The test delivery engine is supported on desktops (Windows, Mac & Linux), laptops, Chromebooks, and tablets.

How can I find out more information about the AK STAR and Alaska Science assessments?

There are ample resources for educators, families, and students on the [AK STAR webpage](https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/akstar) (education.alaska.gov/assessments/akstar) and the [Alaska Science Assessment webpage](https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/science) (education.alaska.gov/assessments/science). These webpages are regularly updated throughout the year.