

Information on Student Participation in State Tests

STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN STATE TESTS

Federal and state laws require all districts and schools to test all students in specific grades and courses. There is no law that allows a parent or student to opt out of state testing and there is no state test opt-out procedure or form. If a parent withdraws his or her child's participation in certain state tests, there may be consequences for the child, the child's teacher, and the school and district.

Schools should provide the information below and other district consequences in writing to parents that withdraw their child or children from state tests. Though there is no requirement in law, schools may want to request that parents document this decision in writing to record the reason why the student was not tested.

Additionally, the Ohio General Assembly passed House Bill 487 in the spring of 2014 that provides for a one year "safe harbor" for districts and teachers as Ohio transitions to new tests for the 2014-2015 school year. This means that some consequences may not apply to all districts and teachers based on results from the 2014-2015 tests.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR STUDENTS WHEN THEY DO NOT TAKE STATE TESTS

1. Third Grade Reading Guarantee

- a. A student who does not take the state's grade 3 reading test will not have a score on that test and may not be promoted to the fourth grade as part of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Some students may be exempted from this requirement or use an alternative test. Information on the exemptions and alternative tests is posted on the department's website.

2. High School Graduation Requirements

- a. A student who entered ninth grade for the first time *before July 1, 2014*, who does not take and pass the Ohio Graduation Tests will not be eligible for a high school diploma.
- b. A student who entered ninth grade for the first time *on or after July 1, 2014*, who does not take and reach the needed score on the tests for at least one graduation option will not be eligible for a high school diploma. More information on these new graduation requirements can be found on the department's website. These options include:
 - i. Cumulative performance earned on the state end-of-course tests or their approved substitutes;
 - ii. A remediation-free score on a college admissions test; or
 - iii. A workforce ready score on the WorkKeys test, in combination with an approved industry credential.

3. English Language Learners

- a. A student who does not take the Ohio Test of English Language Acquisition cannot exit the English as a Second Language program.

A district may have additional consequences for students. For example, a district may include the state's end-of-course test score in a student's grade instead of a final exam. Students attending a nonpublic school may have different testing requirements.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR DISTRICTS, SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS WHEN STUDENTS DO NOT TAKE STATE TESTS:

1. Districts and schools receive no credit when a student doesn't participate in state testing, which can negatively impact a district's state A-F report card ratings.
 - a. Families and businesses often consult A-F ratings in choosing where to live, locate a business and how to vote on tax levies.
 - b. These ratings also impact school choice programs, flexibility on how funding is spent and which schools receive extra help from the state.
 - c. If student participation in a district drops below 95 percent overall or for specific subgroups of students, the district could face new restrictions on how it spends its money pursuant to federal law.
2. Teachers are evaluated based, in part, on student test scores. If a student does not take a state test, that student's growth will not be included in the teacher's evaluation.
3. Teachers will not have access to advanced diagnostic information from state tests, such as student growth projections, to help inform instruction for students who do not take the state tests.

WHY ARE STATE TESTS IMPORTANT?

State tests are critical for measuring student learning and ensuring that all of Ohio's students receive a high-quality education. The results from state tests are how we hold districts, schools and teachers accountable.

The results from state tests provide the public with much-needed information about how all students are performing. Student test scores are the foundation of Ohio's A-F school and district report cards, which are designed to show parents, taxpayers and school leaders how well students are performing.

The report cards allow for apples to apples comparisons between schools as well as identify schools and districts that require additional support or interventions, such as:

1. Offering more grant funding for struggling schools;
2. Relieving high-performing schools and districts of some regulations;
3. Creating school choice options, like charter schools and voucher programs; or
4. Closing poor-performing schools.

Ohio also uses state tests as checkpoints for students to ensure they are ready for their next steps. The Third Grade Reading Guarantee makes sure students can read at grade level before moving on to the fourth grade. Ohio's new graduation options give flexibility to students on which state tests they use, but the tests ensure that students leave high school ready for college and a career.

Please direct questions to statetests@education.ohio.gov.