ST. JOSEPH
SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Assessment Plan

# Assessment in the St. Joseph School District

Assessment is a critical component of both school improvement and student learning. The Saint Joseph School District's assessment program is designed to gather meaningful data for a range of purposes. When thoughtfully designed and appropriately implemented, assessments provide important benefits, including:

1. Helping teachers identify individual student strengths and areas for growth.
2. Supporting teachers in evaluating the effectiveness of their instruction.
3. Enabling students to better understand their own skills and progress.
4. Equipping teachers, parents, students, and policymakers to make informed decisions.
5. Evaluating educational programs for their impact on student learning.
6. Allowing schools and the district to report on overall academic progress.

The district's assessment program includes a variety of formats, such as norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, nationally developed assessments, and locally designed measures. The primary purpose is to monitor and enhance student achievement. Equally important is the role of assessment in guiding curriculum development and improving instructional practices. Because instruction and student achievement are interconnected, they must be addressed together, and since no single assessment can provide all the information needed, the district uses a broad range of assessments: norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, nationally developed assessments, and locally designed measures.

No single assessment can provide all the information needed. As a result, the district uses a broad range of assessment tools and strategies. Drawing on multiple sources of data allows us to effectively answer key questions about student performance and school improvement.

# Using Assessment to Drive Improvement

Key questions guide the evaluation of student learning and school improvement efforts in the Saint Joseph School District:

1. Is SJSD achieving high levels of performance?
2. Which areas of student achievement need improvement?
3. Are district and school-level educational programs improving learning outcomes?
4. Are SJSD's educational programs meeting their intended goals?
5. Which students may benefit from alternative instructional strategies?
6. How much academic growth is being added for SJSD students?

Some of these questions have high-stakes implications for students and schools, particularly in the context of local, state, and national accountability systems. When the stakes are high, it is critical that assessments are valid, reliable, and administered in a standardized manner to ensure the data are accurate and meaningful.

Prepared by Tabitha Kieser – May 2026

For lower-stakes questions, such as those that inform daily instructional decisions or experimentation with teaching strategies, informal or more frequent assessments may be appropriate. In all cases, the purpose of the assessment should guide the selection, development, and interpretation of the instrument used.

The expectations outlined in the MSIP 6 (Missouri School Improvement Program) document, approved by the Missouri State Board of Education, are foundational to the district's approach. Instructional staff are expected to use a combination of formative, interim, and summative assessments to monitor student progress and adjust instruction accordingly.

Educators should regularly and systematically analyze assessment results and other evidence of student learning to refine curriculum, improve instruction, and tailor interventions which ensures that all students have the support needed to meet state academic standards.

# Saint Joseph School District Testing Notes

The St. Joseph School District Assessment Plan for the 2026–2027 school year continues to prioritize frequent, purposeful data reviews while strengthening coherence across curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Assessment is not a separate function, but a critical lever within high-quality Tier 1 instruction.

While the integrity, accuracy, and transparency of assessment data remain a core responsibility, the 2026–2027 plan places increased emphasis on assessment as an indicator for classroom learning.  Greater focus will be placed on how assessment data are interpreted, discussed, and acted upon at the classroom, PLC, and building levels.

District common assessments will continue to be delivered through adopted curriculum and instructional platforms to maintain alignment with guaranteed curriculum expectations. Benchmark and formative assessment practices introduced in prior years will be refined based on district data trends and feedback from educators. To ensure consistency, equity, and reliability across classrooms, the SJSD Formative Assessment Protocol will continue to guide the administration of district formative assessments. This protocol supports equitable testing conditions and shared expectations, ensuring all students experience assessments that accurately reflect their learning.

Prepared by Tabitha Kieser – May 2026

# Key Changes to the SJSD Assessment Plan for 26 - 27

- K - 8 ELA: DIBELS will be the foundational literacy screener.
- Expanded Use of Instructure (Mastery Connect):
    - Implement formative benchmark assessments through Mastery Connect for:
        - 2nd grade ELA/Math
        - 9-10 Social Studies
        - 9 English
        - 9 Physical Science

# Assessment for Learning v. Assessment for Reporting

Assessment for Learning and Assessment for Reporting serve distinct but complementary roles in education. Assessment for Learning is primarily focused on improving ongoing learning through formative practices that are embedded within daily instruction. It occurs continuously during the instructional process and provides descriptive, actionable, and timely feedback that helps students and teachers adjust next steps and guide instruction. In this approach, students and teachers are the primary beneficiaries, with an emphasis on supporting growth and deepening understanding. In contrast, Assessment for Reporting is designed to measure learning outcomes, typically through summative assessments administered at the end of a unit, term, or academic year. The feedback in this context is often limited to scores or grades, and the primary audience includes external stakeholders such as parents, administrators, and policymakers. Its emphasis is on meeting accreditation requirements, ensuring regulatory compliance, and contributing to rankings or accountability systems.

# Indicators for Evaluating “Readiness” and Preparation for Life Beyond Prek-12 SJSD

*Think: Key Cognitive Strategies*

- Problem-Based Assessments
- Standards-Based Trends
- Market Value Assets

*Know: Key Content Knowledge*

- Pre-Kindergarten Observation Form (PKOF) pre/post
- Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF)
- ACT, SAT, & Lexile Growth
- Missouri Grade-Level Assessment (GLMAP) and End-of-Course (EOC)
- Foundational Literacy and Numeracy - Benchmarks in Grades 2 and 4
  High School Proficiency - Students demonstrating proficiency on two or more EOC exams

Prepared by Tabitha Kieser – May 2026

- 9th Grade Attainment Risk Indicators - Mastery View Predictive Assessments (MVPAs) and attendance data
- Early Reading Proficiency - Grade 3 performances measured by i-Ready
- HS Literacy Mastery View Predictive Assessment
- Advanced Coursework Participation by 8th Grade

### *Act: Key Learning Skills and Techniques*

- Percentage of Students on Track to Graduate (monitored quarterly)
- AP Course-Taking Patterns
- ACT Course-Taking Patterns
- Participation in the Arts
- Participation in PLTW – Computational Thinking
- Application of Knowledge in Cross-Disciplinary Contexts (e.g., WorkKeys, ACT STEM)

### *Go: Key Transition Knowledge and Skills*

- College and Career Readiness Index
- Postsecondary Readiness
- Four-Year Graduation Rate
- Career Readiness (MSIP 6 – WorkKeys, ASVAB, AP, Dual Credit, IRCs, CTECs, etc.)
- Work Approved Experience
- Postsecondary Outcomes: Employment, College Applications, Postsecondary Training, Military Commitment, and Other Pathways

# Analysis and Use of Assessment Results for Reporting

Assessment results are analyzed in a comprehensive and systematic manner, integrating multiple data sources to make informed inferences and draw conclusions about student achievement. While understanding how students are performing is essential, it is even more critical that assessment data is used to inform and drive action plans. To ensure effective analysis and planning, SJSD employs a structured data analysis process to review large-scale assessment data and guide continuous improvement.

Performance data is examined from three key perspectives:

1. Value-Added Analysis
   This approach evaluates the amount of academic growth made over a specific period, relative to expected growth. Rather than focusing solely on performance levels, value-added analysis measures improvement regardless of students' starting points. This provides a clearer picture of instructional impact and student progress.

2. Comparative Analysis
   SJSD compares its results with those of districts that share similar demographic characteristics, both within the Northland metropolitan area and statewide. These comparisons help the district evaluate the effectiveness of educational practices in the

broader context of peer performance, offering insights into potential areas of strength or improvement.

3. Trend Analysis
   Trend analysis requires at least three data points, typically over three years, to identify meaningful patterns. Unlike year-to-year fluctuations, which may be affected by anomalies or cohort effects, multi-year trends offer more reliable insights. When combined with value-added data, trend analysis provides a comprehensive view of long-term performance and improvement.

Once strengths and areas for growth are identified, root cause analysis is conducted. This process seeks to uncover the underlying factors contributing to specific outcomes. For strengths, identifying root causes allows for the replication of effective practices across the district. For areas of concern, root cause analysis helps determine contributing issues so that targeted interventions can be implemented. This process aligns with the Study phase of the PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) cycle, which SJSD uses to guide the development, implementation, and monitoring of action plans.

## Large Scale Assessment Provisions for Special Populations

Modifications to standardized testing procedures are permitted in accordance with the 1989 Assessment Standards for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), English Language Learners (ELL), or students with a Section 504 Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP). In certain cases, students with an IEP or ELL status may be exempt from specific assessments. All accommodations and exemptions must align with the current guidelines established by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

## Assessment Ethics and Security

Standardized testing plays an important role in the education of all students. The purpose of assessments is twofold: to determine individual student achievement and to measure the effectiveness of programs and schools. SJSD is committed to ensuring that achievement test results accurately reflect student performance. While strong scores are a priority, they must never come at the expense of score validity.

All testing practices in SJSD adhere to state and national standards for ethical testing. Valid and reliable achievement scores serve the best interests of students and can only be obtained when ethical testing practices are upheld across the entire organization. Although the assessment department does not directly supervise principals or teachers, those who do hold that responsibility must emphasize and support the importance of test ethics and security. As a unified system, SJSD must maintain the integrity of its assessments to ensure valid data for instruction, accountability, and continuous improvement.

All SJSD policies related to test ethics and security, as outlined in the district's assessment plan, must be implemented fully and consistently.

**Compromising test conditions during "pre" and "post" assessments may lead to inaccurate, unreliable, and invalid data—ultimately undermining the quality of instructional decisions and program evaluation.*

## Sources Informing Assessment Guidelines

The development of the following guidelines was informed by a variety of sources, including but not limited to:

- *Missouri Assessment Program Test Coordinator's Manual*
- *Missouri Assessment Program Test Examiner's Manual*
- *Missouri Assessment End-of-Course Test Coordinator's Manual*
- *Missouri Assessment End-of-Course Test Examiner's Manual*
- Consultations with DESE Assessment Department staff
- Publications from test publishers
- Articles from professional journals

Two board policies govern SJSD's assessment practices:

- Board Policy IL – Assessment Program
- Board Policy ILA – Test Integrity and Security

## Test Preparation Guidelines

SJSD is committed to ensuring that students are well-prepared to succeed on academic assessments. However, test preparation should not significantly detract from high-quality instruction. Whenever possible, test preparation activities should be integrated into regular, ongoing instructional practices. It is important to recognize that no assessment can measure more than a sample of the curriculum students are expected to learn. Therefore, focusing instruction solely on the specific content of a test results in a narrowed curriculum and may artificially inflate test scores. This approach does not reflect students' true academic abilities. CTB/McGraw-Hill, a leading test publisher, advises against targeted instruction aimed solely at district-wide test preparation. Instead, they recommend using assessment results after testing to guide instructional follow-up and support.

Appropriate test preparation activities are those that empower students to accurately demonstrate their true academic achievement. These activities encompass teaching general test-taking strategies, offering guided practice opportunities, familiarizing students with the test format and item types, and helping them develop effective study and preparation habits. To

further promote equity and consistency across classrooms, SJSD will follow the SJSD Formative Assessment Protocol for administering all district formative assessments.

By emphasizing these approaches, SJSD not only supports the validity and reliability of assessment results but also fosters meaningful and equitable learning experiences for all students.

## Test Interpretation

A test score provides one indicator of a student's performance within the specific content area assessed. However, to gain a complete and accurate understanding of a student's achievement, multiple sources of evidence must be considered. Individual test results should always be interpreted in conjunction with other available information. This principle applies equally to groups and programs as it does to individual students.

Educators interpreting test scores for students, groups, or schools should exercise caution to avoid drawing conclusions from misleading fluctuations that may not reflect true educational improvement or decline. Making decisions about a district, school program, or teacher based solely on a single test score is inappropriate and may lead to inaccurate or unfair conclusions.

Test results should not be used for purposes for which the test was not designed or validated. Some examples include:

- Comparing scores from different tests or subject areas that are not equated. For instance, if a school has a higher percentage of students in the advanced category for MAP Mathematics than for MAP Science, this does not necessarily indicate greater learning in mathematics. The same caution applies to comparing MAP scores across different grades.
- Comparing districts, schools, or programs using tests taken by non-random samples of students. Tests such as the ACT or SAT often involve self-selected examinees and therefore do not represent the entire student population, unlike statewide tests administered to all students in a given grade (e.g., 11th grade statewide assessments).

Effective test score interpretation involves examining patterns across multiple years and data sources while clearly acknowledging the limitations of any given analysis. It is also critical to consider the role of measurement error; differences that are not statistically significant should never be reported as meaningful. Applying high-stakes decisions based on invalid interpretations can cause serious harm to students and educators.

# Suspected Ethical Violations

Ethical assessment is a very serious matter. Any person who suspects a violation of assessment ethics should immediately report the information to the District Test Coordinator. Allegations of ethical violations are reviewed by the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Department for possible recommendation of action. These reports are also viewed and assessed by the Superintendent and Human Resources.

# Participation Requirements for Large Scale Assessments

SJSD accounts for all students enrolled at the time of state or district norm-referenced assessments. Students are classified into one of four categories:

1. Participated in state or district norm-referenced assessments under standard conditions.
2. Participated in state or district norm-referenced assessments with accommodations approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for the specific content area assessed.
3. Participated in an alternate state assessment.
4. Did not participate in state or district norm-referenced assessments due to one of the following documented reasons: prolonged illness, extended absence from school, parental request, or a physical recommendation. All reasonable efforts must be made to ensure students can make up missed assessments.

# Communication of Assessment Results

The Missouri School Improvement Program and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education require that assessment information be communicated to all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, community members, Board of Education members, and administrators. SJSD ensures that all assessment data is shared with the appropriate stakeholders in a timely and accessible format.

The Board of Education receives an annual report on SJSD's large-scale assessment results. These reports present data both in aggregate and disaggregated forms for the current school year, as well as longitudinally. Results are detailed by content area and grade level and, when available, include growth analyses, comparative data, and trend analyses.

Parents and community members access assessment information through the district website, the SJSD Assessment Progress reports, local newspaper updates, and individual assessment reports for their children. Teachers and administrators receive both individual and aggregate

data to support instructional planning and school improvement efforts. All district staff are provided with relevant assessment data to assist in the development and revision of school improvement plans.

It is important to emphasize that sharing this information is also critical for informing a comprehensive program evaluation system, which plays a key role in supporting and enhancing the effectiveness of academic programs.

## Summary

The SJSD assessment plan is a balanced program designed to provide essential information for making informed instructional and programmatic decisions. When administered and interpreted correctly, achievement assessments offer valuable insights that schools can use to enhance teaching and educational programs. SJSD's goal is for all students to achieve continuous growth and improvement. This goal is realized when teachers effectively deliver the curriculum and prepare students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on assessments. Within this framework, the assessment program serves as a critical support for student learning.