

Fact Sheet on the 2016-17 TCAP Assessment

The 2016-17 TCAP assessment shares the same goals we have been working toward for several years: it is a better, fully aligned assessment that captures the depth and breadth of what students are learning—and have been learning—in the classroom every day. The information from this assessment will provide educators, parents, and students with a big-picture perspective on how they are progressing academically compared to their peers across Tennessee, and better information about a student's strengths, needs, and areas for growth.

State tests should always complement the other feedback loops that teachers, parents, and students use to get a more complete picture of a student's development, including classroom performance, report cards, portfolios, performances, and other ways students show their growth. State tests are not meant to be the sole driver of any instructional decisions.

For the 2016-17 TCAP, the department will work with a qualified, proven vendor; streamline and reduce testing time; and reset the conversation on the role of assessments in Tennessee. The department heard from educators, families, and students—as well as the state's Assessment Task Force, which was created to support intentional and streamlined assessments—about their ideas to improve testing and was able to take significant steps in response.

Overall, **students will spend about 30 percent less time taking state tests this year.** In grades 3-8, TCAP has been shortened by 200-210 minutes, depending on the grade. Most End of Course assessments have been reduced by 40-120 minutes; the only End of Course tests that are unchanged are biology and chemistry, which are already the shortest End of Course tests.

Additionally, testing logistics and scheduling will improve. Instead of a Part I and Part II, **the test will be given in a single administration window at the end of the school year.** To minimize the impact on the overall school environment, this window will be **one week shorter** than last year. And, instead of longer subtests, **students will take the test in a series of shorter subparts**, which are often small enough—sometimes as little as 30 minutes—to fit into the normal school schedule. While the department will continuously seek to improve testing in Tennessee, these changes move us forward as follows:

- **Math:** Part I has been eliminated. Instead, the assessment will be given at the end of the school year over the course of three shorter subparts. Concepts that had been incorporated into Part I will be assessed using math problems called integrated tasks, which will measure problem-solving skills. As was the case for last year's test, there will be a mix of calculator-permitted and calculator-prohibited subparts. Depending on the grade, **a student in grades 3-8 will see a reduction of 20-25 minutes in math. Each End of Course assessment in math has been shortened by 65 minutes—which is more than a 30 percent reduction from last year.**

- **English language arts:** The writing portion that had previously been tested as a Part I in February has now been folded into the English language arts assessment at the end of the school year, which will be given in four shorter subparts over the course of one assessment window. The department has worked with its new vendor to expedite the hand-scoring process—which is the reason why the writing section has traditionally been given earlier—and will provide guidance to districts about how to schedule this subpart early in the test window. The department is also reducing questions where possible.

Last year, all students responded to a writing prompt that was operational (meaning, it was scored) and one field test prompt (meaning, it did not factor into a student’s score and instead helped the department to determine whether the prompt would be appropriate for future tests). This year, in response to feedback from teachers and concerns about student stamina, the department will restructure field testing. Under the new structure, only about one-third to one-half of all students will participate in a separate writing field test, and they will do so about a month prior to the main testing window. The writing prompt for the U.S. history exam will also be field tested during this time. Districts will be selected to participate in field testing on a rotational basis—about once every two years.

Depending on the grade, **students in grades 3-8 will have a reduction of 75-95 minutes in ELA, not including the writing field test. Each End of Course assessment in English will be 120 minutes shorter—which reduces the test by more than a third for some students.**

- **Social studies:** Part I has been eliminated, and the entire test in grades 3-8 will be a field test this year. All students will participate in the field test during the 2016-17 end-of-year test window. Field tests are *not* scored for a grade and do *not* factor into educators’ evaluations. Instead, field testing is a process that education leaders and psychometricians use to ensure that, for future tests, students are only scored on test questions that are valid and appropriate for them to take. **The grade 3-8 field test will be given in one, 50-minute test. That is 85-95 minutes shorter than last year’s test—a reduction of as much as 66 percent, or two-thirds.**

U.S. history, which is the only state End of Course exam in social studies, will be given in three subparts at the end of the year and **will be 40 minutes shorter than last year.**

- **Science:** The science test has never included a Part I. It will be given in two subparts at the end of the school year for grades 3-8, and in one sitting for the End of Course exams. This test has not yet been reworked to include multiple types of questions, but while it is still a multiple-choice test, the department plans to redesign the test in future years to better capture what students are learning and able to do, which would give it a similar feel to the other state assessments. The science test has not changed in time from last year.

Scoring

Scores and raw data from the 2015-16 state tests will be available in fall 2016, as the department outlined last year. Students who took End of Course exams in ELA, math, and U.S. history will receive full, newly redesigned score reports, which will provide better information to parents and students. Results from grades 3-8 will be more limited, raw data—for example, the department will be able to share how many questions a student answered correctly, but not what that score means in terms of a student's proficiency and growth level.

However, for the 2016-17 assessment, the department has worked to not only hand-score test questions more efficiently, but to also provide results on an earlier timeline for high school students, educators, and families. For End of Course exams, the department is planning for results to be available for families and schools in summer 2017. Grades 3-8 test results will be on a different timeline. Because it is the first year we will be able to fully administer the new tests for grades 3-8, the scoring results will be delayed while Tennessee teachers and the department complete the scoring process during the summer. Therefore, the results for grades 3-8 will not be released until fall 2017. During future test administrations, the department will publish results for grades 3-8 and high school on a similar timeline.

Additional facts to know:

- As of the 2015-16 school year:
 - Number of students in Tennessee: 995,892
 - Number of teachers in Tennessee: 63,170
 - Number of schools in Tennessee: 1,811
 - How many are high schools: 418
 - Number of districts in Tennessee: 146
- Testing window for 2016-17:
 - Fall Block: Nov. 28-Dec. 16, 2016
 - Traditional and Spring Block: April 15-May 5, 2017
- History of testing in Tennessee:
 - 1983: Tennessee began annual statewide testing to provide important information about the collective progress of students in our state with the Tennessee Proficiency Test
 - 1988: Tennessee State Board of Education commissioned the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP)
 - 1992: The Education Improvement Act (EIA) made TCAP a state mandated assessment
 - 2015: First year of a new assessment with different, more rigorous questions