

9 March 2023

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The Alaska Dept. of Education and Early Development (DEED) is taking a new approach to statewide assessments that better reflects learning throughout the school year, and helps educators target instruction to students' needs. The new Alaska Innovative Assessment System:

- Streamlines testing and maximizes efficiency, providing a more seamless experience between interim and summative assessments.
- Increases coherence across interim and end-of-year summative tests so educators can drive students toward consistent, challenging learning targets.
- Helps amplify student learning by giving educators, students, and families meaningful insights on student strengths and areas to support students in reaching their highest academic potential.
- Increases opportunity for students and schools to show growth.

The Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR) is the state summative assessment, is administered to students in grades 3-9, and assesses their understanding of the Alaska ELA and Mathematics Standards adopted in 2012. The [balanced approach connects](#) fall or winter MAP Growth interim tests with the spring AK STAR assessment. Additionally, the Alaska Science Assessment is administered to students in grades 5, 8, and 10, and assesses students' understanding of the Alaska Science Standards adopted in 2019.

**The testing schedule for AK STAR and AK Science Assessments is:**

- English Language Arts for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades: April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>
- Math for 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades: April 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>
- Science for 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades: April 14<sup>th</sup>
- English Language Arts for 5<sup>th</sup> grade: April 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>
- Make up days: April 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>

**No electronic devices**, besides those used for testing, will be allowed in the testing environment. This includes, but is not limited to, cell phones, laptops, iPads, e-readers, smart watches, fitness trackers, etc. Please be mindful of this and ask your child to leave personal electronic devices at home on the days they are scheduled to test. If an electronic device is medically necessary, contact the principal to discuss this.

Parents have the right to make educational decisions for their child, including whether to participate in statewide testing. Enclosed you will find an informative document from DEED titled “Why Should my Child Take the State Assessment.” Practice tests, tutorial videos, and additional information can be found on the district website at [www.k12northstar.org/Page/10976](http://www.k12northstar.org/Page/10976).

If you have any questions about the upcoming assessments, please the office or call the Department of Teaching and Learning at 452-2000 ext. 11422.

Sincerely,

Jeff Lesseig

### **What is my child tested on in the spring?**

Each spring, schools give the statewide assessments in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics to students in grades 3 – 9 and science in grades 5, 8, and 10. This test provides students the opportunity to show their understanding of important skills in these subject areas at their grade level.

### **Why is assessment important in my child’s education?**

There are five essential questions that we ask (and answer) in regard to student learning every day in our classrooms:

1. What do we want our students to know and do? (Effective statewide standards)
2. How will we teach them? (Effective local curriculum and instruction)
3. How will we know if they learned it? (Effective assessment)
4. What will we do if they do not learn it? (Effective intervention)
5. What will we do if they already know it? (Effective enrichment)

Effective assessment is the bridge between teaching the standards and ensuring that support is available for all students. It is a key part of student learning, and everything we do should work toward this goal.

### **How is this assessment meaningful for my child?**

The statewide assessment is a summative assessment, which is just one piece of a balanced assessment system. Summative assessments are designed to give information on a student’s understanding of the state’s English language arts, mathematics, and science standards. When administered over multiple years, this assessment is even more meaningful because it informs you on how far your child has progressed in their learning.

### **Why does DEED give a statewide assessment?**

First, we want to be able to inform families, educators, policy makers, the community, and businesses how our schools and districts are performing. Second, after we have determined how our schools are performing, we want to identify schools in the most need of school improvement efforts. Third, we want to ensure there is equity in education for students across Alaska. Our mission is to provide an excellent education to every student every day.

### **What assessments will my student take in the spring?**

DEED administers the following required assessments:

- Alaska System for Academic Readiness (AK STAR): students in grades 3-9 in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics
- Alaska Science Assessment: students in grades 5, 8, and 10
- Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM): students with significant cognitive disabilities take DLM instead of AK STAR and the Alaska Science assessments. Students in grades 3-9 in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics and students in grades 5, 8, and 10 in science
- ACCESS for ELLs: students identified as English Learners in grades K-12

### **Why is it important for my child to participate in the statewide assessment?**

Educators make decisions locally about how to teach Alaska’s standards. With this in mind, the summative assessment is a standardized way to determine how well your child’s school and district are performing. Also, at the state level, we invest over a billion dollars in public education each year, and the citizens of Alaska have a right to know if that money is contributing to increased learning for students.

Parents have the right to make educational decisions for their child, including whether to participate in statewide testing. Please check with your district for more information.

More information can be found on the DEED’s assessment webpage ([education.alaska.gov/assessments](https://education.alaska.gov/assessments)).  
A video is also available at <https://youtu.be/xY-Eb-nHO9A>.