



# FAQs About the Performance Evaluation for Alaska's Schools (PEAKS)



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**Q. What is PEAKS?**

A. PEAKS is a statewide summative assessment that was administered to students in the spring of 2019. It assesses students' understanding of the Alaska English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics standards adopted in 2010 and the Science standards adopted in 2010. The ELA and Math assessments were administered to students in grades 3-8 and the Science test was given to students in grades 5, 6, and 7. PEAKS provides a snapshot of student, school, district, and state progress at the end of a school year. Additionally, PEAKS is an accountability tool for schools statewide.

**Q. Why is PEAKS important?**

A. PEAKS is important because results provide: information to parents, educators, policy makers, communities, and businesses about how Alaska's schools and districts are performing; data to help schools improve; and information so that Alaska can ensure equity in education for every student.

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*The mission of the FNSBSD:  
"an excellent, equitable education in a safe, supportive  
environment so all students will succeed and contribute to a  
diverse and changing society"*

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**Q. How is PEAKS an indicator of student learning?**

A. PEAKS is an end-of-year assessment that provides an overall picture of an individual student's performance on the grade-level standards. Additionally, it provides relative information about how an individual student performed on groups of skills and abilities measured by the reporting categories.

While it gives parents and educators an objective check once a year to see how well students are meeting the standards in their grade levels, it is not the only indicator of student learning. PEAKS scores should be used in conjunction with other measures of student learning, such as classroom work and other school assessments, for example MAP.

**Q. How are the PEAKS results used?**

A. At the following levels

District level - PEAKS results are used to look at how Fairbanks students are performing compared to students across Alaska. They provide information about areas which may need changes or additional support, or areas of professional learning for teachers.

School level - PEAKS results provide grade level information about potential areas for additional focus or instruction. Over time, additional PEAKS results should show trends in performance which may require changes in instructional programs or additional student supports.

Classroom level - PEAKS results provide teachers an additional piece of information for understanding student learning. Teachers will use student PEAKS reports, along with classroom measures and assessments like MAP or A MSweb Plus, to target instruction for individual students throughout the year.

**FOR MORE  
INFORMATION  
VISIT:**

[https://www.k12northstar.org/  
Page/6352](https://www.k12northstar.org/Page/6352)

[https://education.alaska.gov/as  
sessments/peaks](https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/peaks)

**Q. Is PEAKS a new baseline for future growth?**

A. Yes. The 2017 PEAKS results were used as a baseline for future growth in the new accountability system. These spring 2019 results provide a second year of comparable data for this process. This system has been developed for Alaska’s state plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

**Q. What types of questions are on PEAKS?**

A. PEAKS has several different types of questions (called items):

- Multiple-choice: select one right answer from four possible answer choices
- Multiple-select: select more than one correct answer
- Short answer: short written response such as a number or word
- Text-Dependent Analysis: Text-based writing for grades 4 – 9.

Students who took the computer-based assessment had technology-enhanced items that allowed them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills at more complex levels of thinking. These technology-enhanced items had similar counterparts in the paper-based versions of the tests.

**Q. How are PEAKS scores reported?**

A. Student performance is represented by the overall scale score. The scale range, from 400 to 600, is divided into four levels of achievement: advanced, proficient, below proficient, and far below proficient. A student who earns a scale score of at least 500 is meeting the standards at a proficient level or higher.

**Q. What is a ‘Reporting Category’?**

A. Alaska’s standards define what students should know and be able to do. The standards are broken down into groups of similar standards. PEAKS items assess student skills on the reporting categories that correspond to a group of standards. Symbols on the reports show whether the student performed better than, about the same as, or not as well as the minimum proficient level on each reporting category.

**State of Alaska, DEED Resources:**

**Parent Guide to Student Reports**

[https://education.alaska.gov/tls/Assessments/Peaks/ParentGuide\\_Peaks\\_Assessment.pdf](https://education.alaska.gov/tls/Assessments/Peaks/ParentGuide_Peaks_Assessment.pdf)  
[https://education.alaska.gov/tls/Assessments/Peaks/ParentGuide\\_Science\\_Assessment.pdf](https://education.alaska.gov/tls/Assessments/Peaks/ParentGuide_Science_Assessment.pdf)

**Parent/ Community Resources on PEAKS and State Assessments**

<https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/peaks>

**Educator Guide to Assessment Reports**

[https://education.alaska.gov/tls/Assessments/Peaks/EducatorGuide\\_Assessment\\_Reports.pdf](https://education.alaska.gov/tls/Assessments/Peaks/EducatorGuide_Assessment_Reports.pdf)

