Learn More About Your Child’s Assessments

Why is it important to assess students?

As a parent, you probably use more than a yardstick to measure your child’s growth. You may use bathroom scales, school photographs or clothing sizes to measure physical growth. As your child matures you may employ other measures of growth such as later bedtimes, new responsibilities or getting a driver’s license. Likewise, Tacoma Public Schools uses different measures to monitor and manage your child’s academic growth. These include progress report, collections of work and a variety of assessments. However, just as no single measure of physical growth is completely adequate, no single assessment provides a complete accounting of a child’s knowledge and skills. Each assessment administered by the state and district and each assessment that the teacher uses in the classroom provide part of a complete picture.

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**i-Ready Universal Screener: What is it?**

*Kindergarten – Grade 10*

- *i-Ready Universal Screener is a tool that* helps teachers to effectively assess their students and then provide individualized instruction based on each student’s unique needs. *i-Ready* assesses the following skill areas:

  **Reading**
  - Phonological Awareness
  - Phonics
  - High-Frequency Words
  - Vocabulary
  - Comprehension

  **Math**
  - Number and Operations
  - Algebra and Algebraic Thinking
  - Measurement and Data
  - Geometry

- *i-Ready* begins by giving students an adaptive assessment. An adaptive assessment is a test that automatically adjusts the difficulty of the questions according to each student’s performance in order to determine his or her abilities in reading or math.

- Before your child begins the assessment, it’s important to set appropriate expectations. *i-Ready* is a very different kind of test that presents students with questions that can be both too easy and too hard. It is designed to do this until the assessment finds exactly the level at which the student is performing. Therefore, your child will certainly see some items above his or her level. Encourage your child to independently complete the test to the best of his or her ability, and know that it is okay to get questions wrong.

- Each time a student gets an item incorrect, he or she will be presented with a simpler question until the *Universal Screener* finds the grade level at which the student is performing. The assessment efficiently assesses students across multiple grade levels, allowing for identification of root causes of students’ struggles or for identification of areas where a student is ready for further challenge. This information will then provide the teacher with a “road map” to instructional remediation.

**i-Ready: Measuring Student Growth**

- Is taken on a computer that “tailors” the test to the individual student’s performance level
- Measures and reports the individual student’s growth over time
- Is available to teachers throughout the year to use whenever needed

**i-Ready: Using Scale Score**

- Range from 0-800
- Vertical Scale: Think of it like a growth chart that you see at a pediatrician’s office. Every child can be measured on one chart
- i-Ready scale scores put each child into three performance tiers
  - Below (Tier 3): Students are more than 1 level below
  - Approaching (Tier 2): Students are 1 level below
On/Above (Tier 1): Students are on or above level

- i-Ready scale scores help teachers know where a student’s strengths are and if additional instruction is needed in any specific content areas. Teachers use this information to help them guide their work with your child.

Important Reminders:

- i-Ready Universal Screener is new for students and teachers. This fall our students took their first Universal Screener, so many students may have “rushed” the tests and did not get a chance to fully demonstrate their knowledge and skills.
- i-Ready is one of several assessments teachers use to help them guide instruction in the classroom.
- For more information on i-Ready, please go to TPS Assessment Website: https://www.tacomaschools.org/assessment/Pages/iReady.aspx
District Reading Assessment (DRA): What is it?

Kindergarten – Grade 5

- The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) enables teachers to meet with their students one-on-one to listen to them read a short book or passage and retell what was read.
- The books or passages are leveled with multiple stages within each grade from Kindergarten to 8th grade so that a teacher can identify where a student can read without any help and where a good instructional level might be.
- In addition to identifying a level of reading, the teacher can also see what a student’s strengths are and what reading challenges are present.
- The DRA assesses how accurate a student can read the words, how fluent the student reads (using phrasing and punctuation to sound smooth and similar to talking) and also whether a student can understand what he or she read.
- Once a level, strengths, and reading challenges are identified a teacher can use this information along with information gathered from the i-Ready assessment to support students who have like needs in flexible groups and individualize reading instruction during one-on-one conferences.

DRA: Measuring Student Growth

- Is required twice a year (winter and spring) in kindergarten; three times a year in first and second grade (fall, winter and spring); and as needed in third through fifth grade when a student does not meet a specific score on i-Ready.
- Measures the individual student’s growth over time.
- Is available to teachers throughout the year to use whenever needed – books called Benchmarks Texts and Progress Monitoring Passages are available.

DRA: Scoring

- Levels span from DRA 1 to DRA 80 with multiple levels for many grades. For example Kindergarteners might range from 1-4 and first grade from 4-18 in order to be reading “on grade level.”
- Students must pass both the accuracy and comprehension part of the assessment in order to be identified as reading at a level. For example, a student who is strong at decoding words but cannot comprehend a book would need a lower level until he/she could both decode AND comprehend the book.

Important Reminders:

- i-Ready and the DRA are powerful assessments to help teachers plan and design instruction for your child.
- In addition to these two district assessments, TPS teachers use many other classroom-based assessments to measure how well their students are learning new skills and strategies and to guide instruction in both reading and in math.
- For more information about i-Ready or DRA, please contact your child’s school.
- For more information on DRA, please go to TPS Assessment Website: https://www.tacomaschools.org/assessment/Pages/DRA.aspx
Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA): What is it?

Grade 3 – Grade 8, Grade 11

The Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) is a comprehensive, mandatory online assessment for students in Grades 3 – 8 and Grade 11. SBA assesses mathematics and English language arts (ELA) using computer adaptive technology (CAT). CAT allows SBA to respond to individual students based on the responses given, and adjusts the difficulty of questions throughout the assessment. SBA replaced the Measurement of Student Progress (MSP) in all school districts across the state in the 2014 – 2015 school year.

SBA: Key Features

- Measures critical thinking with questions that ask students to demonstrate their research, writing, and problem solving skills.
- Assessments are untimed and students can take breaks so that they can do their best.
- Accessibility resources for all students and accommodations – such as Braille – for those who need them.
- Developed with input from K-12 teachers, higher education faculty, and other experts.

SBA: Scoring

- A student’s performance on state assessments is reported using scale scores. These scores are used to place the student into one of four levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smarter Balanced (scale scores)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorough understanding of/ability to apply skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate understanding of/ability to apply skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial understanding of/ability to apply skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal understanding of/ability to apply skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Important Reminders:

- Students do well on state assessments when they come to class regularly and do their schoolwork.
- Although the amount of testing time varies by state and school district, two studies found that students spend less than 2% of instructional time taking assessments- Center for American Progress.
- SBA helps the student know now if they are ready for college or work or can take advanced classes
- SBA also shows how the student is improving and where they may need help.
- For more information on SBA, please go to TPS Website: https://www.tacomaschools.org/smarterbalanced/Pages/New-scores.aspx
**Measurement of Student Progress (MSP) Science: What is it?**

*Grade 5 & Grade 8*

The Measurements of Student Progress (MSP) measures the level of proficiency that Washington students have achieved based on the Washington State K-12 Science Learning Standards, which were adopted in June 2009.

- The MSP is administered in a single day. It includes multiple choice, short answer, and completion items.
- *Next Generation Science Standards* tentative timeline for implementation will be in the 2017-2018 school year.

**MSP: Scoring**

- A student’s performance on state assessments is reported using scale scores. These scores are used to place the student into one of four levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSP Science (scale scores)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS): What is it?**

*2017 – 2018 School Year*

- A new set of standards that provide consistent science education through all grades, with an emphasis on engineering and technology.
- Describes what each student should know in the four domains of science: physical science; life science; earth and space science; and engineering, technology, and science application.
- When students are learning about science, they are also enhancing their skills in reading, writing and math.

**Important Reminders:**

- The science learning standards being assessed in spring 2017 are based on the Washington State 2009 K-12 Science Learning Standards.
- The *Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)* which is also known as the Washington State 2013 K-12 Science Learning Standards, will first be assessed in spring of 2018. The assessment is currently being developed.
- For more information on MSP, please go to OSPI Website: [http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/StateTesting/MSP.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/StateTesting/MSP.aspx)