

Guidance for Schools

Student Participation in Testing

Federal and state laws require all districts and schools to test all students in specific grades and courses. There is no law that allows a parent or student to opt out of state testing, and there is no state test opt-out procedure or form. If a parent withdraws a child from participation in certain state tests, there may be consequences for the student, the student's teacher, and the school and district.

To help parents make informed decisions, schools should provide in writing the possible consequences of opting out, which are included in this guidance, as well information about other district consequences. Schools are not required to — but may want to — request that a parent place in writing a decision to withdraw his or her student, so there is a record of why the student was not tested.

WHY ARE STATE TESTS IMPORTANT?

State tests are critical for measuring student learning and ensuring that every Ohio student receives a high-quality education. The results from state tests are how we hold districts, schools and teachers accountable.

SAFE HARBOR

The Ohio General Assembly has enacted a safe harbor provision for districts, teachers and students as Ohio transitions to its new assessment system. Under safe harbor, districts are exempt from some consequences based on their students' test scores for the 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years. Districts cannot use student scores as a factor in a decision to promote or retain a student, except under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Districts also cannot use student scores as a factor in a decision to deny a student course credit. However, [state law](#) does allow a local school board of education to create local policy that denies promotion if students do not participate in required state tests.

Safe harbor only applies to educators who use value-added ratings from state tests. Safe harbor does not apply to teachers or principals exclusively using vendor tests or other local student growth measures. Please note, teachers and principals will use value-added results from state tests administered in the 2016-17 school year for spring 2018 evaluation ratings.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR STUDENTS WHEN THEY DO NOT TAKE STATE TESTS

Schools must administer state tests and students are expected to take them. If a student does not participate in state testing, there may be consequences for the student, the student's teacher, and the school and district.

1. Third Grade Reading Guarantee
 - a. A student who does not take the state's grade 3 English language arts test will not have a score on that test and may not be promoted to the fourth grade as part of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, unless an exemption applies. For more information on exemptions, visit the [Department's website](#).
2. High School Graduation Requirements
 - a. A student who entered ninth grade for the first time before *July 1, 2014*, must meet curriculum requirements and take and pass the Ohio Graduation Tests or meet one of the three graduation options for the Class of 2018 and beyond to earn a high school diploma.
 - b. A student who entered ninth grade for the first time *on or after July 1, 2014*, must meet curriculum requirements and take and reach the needed score on the tests for at least one graduation option to earn a high school diploma. More information on the graduation requirements are on the [Department's website](#).

These options include:

- i. Cumulative performance earned on the state end-of-course tests or their approved substitutes;
 - ii. A remediation-free score on the ACT or SAT college admissions test; or
 - iii. A workforce ready score on the WorkKeys test, in combination with an approved industry-recognized credential.
3. English learners
 - a. A student who does not take the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment cannot exit the English as a Second Language program.
 4. Students at eSchools
 - a. A student who does not participate in state testing in the spring for any required assessment for two consecutive years will be unenrolled in the school of attendance.
 5. Scholarship students:
 - a. For the majority of students who receive a state scholarship (EdChoice, Jon Peterson, or Cleveland Scholarship) participation in state testing or an approved alternative test is required. A student who does not participate in testing will not have their scholarship renewed the following year. Please direct questions to Chartered.Nonpublic.Schools@education.ohio.gov

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR DISTRICTS, SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS WHEN STUDENTS DO NOT TAKE STATE TESTS

1. Districts and schools receive no credit when a student doesn't participate in state testing. This can negatively impact a district's state A-F report card grades.
 - a. Families and businesses often consult A-F grades in choosing where to live, locate a business and how to vote on tax levies.
 - b. These grades also may impact school choice programs, flexibility on how funding is spent and which schools receive extra help from the state.
 - c. If student participation in a district drops below 95 percent overall or for specific subgroups of students, the district could face new restrictions on how it spends its money pursuant to federal law. Additionally, the district or school will receive demotions on their Gap Closing report card measure.
 - d. Students who do not participate in the required state tests will earn no points towards the school's performance index score.
 - e. In the future, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will require schools and districts that do not meet the 95 percent participation requirement to develop a corrective action plan. They must use stakeholder input to develop a plan that will improve their participation rate.
2. Districts and schools cannot count students who do not take all required state tests in their average daily membership (ADM) for state funding, unless they obtain a waiver from the Department.
3. Teachers may be evaluated based, in part, on student test scores from the 2016-2017 school year. If a student does not take a state test, that student's growth will not be included in the teacher's evaluation.
4. Teachers will not have access to advanced diagnostic information from state tests, such as student growth projections, to help inform instruction.

OHIO'S STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ALSO PARTICIPATE IN STATE TESTS

The individualized education program (IEP) team is responsible for determining how a student with a disability will participate in the state assessments. The student's IEP team decides whether a student needs accessibility features, including accommodations, on district and statewide tests. For students with significant cognitive disabilities, the IEP team may determine that Ohio's Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities is the appropriate test.

Please direct questions to statetests@education.ohio.gov.