

Student Participation

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 child, the child's teacher, and the school and district.

To help parents make informed decisions, schools should provide in writing the possible consequences of opting out listed below, 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.

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. In addition, districts will not evaluate or take employment actions against teachers and principals based on value-added data that stems from the results of the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 tests, unless a district and its teachers agree to use that measure. Finally, 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.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR STUDENTS WHEN THEY DO NOT TAKE STATE TESTS

1. Third Grade Reading Guarantee
 - a. A student who does not take the state's grade 3 reading 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*, who does not take and pass the Ohio Graduation Tests will not be eligible for a high school diploma.
 - b. A student who entered ninth grade for the first time *on or after July 1, 2014*, who does not take and reach the needed score on the tests for at least one graduation option will not be eligible for a high school diploma. More information on these new graduation requirements can be found 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 a college admissions test; or
 - iii. A workforce ready score on the WorkKeys test, in combination with an approved [industry-recognized credential](#).
3. English Language Learners
 - a. A student who does not take the Ohio English Language Proficiency Assessment cannot exit the English as a Second Language program.

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, which can negatively impact a district's state A-F report card ratings.
 - a. Families and businesses often consult A-F ratings in choosing where to live, locate a business and how to vote on tax levies.
 - b. These ratings 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.
2. Teachers may be evaluated based, in part, on student test scores. If a student does not take a state test, that student's growth will not be included in the teacher's evaluation.
3. Teachers will not have access to advanced diagnostic information from state tests, such as student growth projections, to help inform instruction for students who do not take the state tests.

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 generally available accessibility features, accommodations and/or modifications. For students with significant intellectual disabilities, the IEP team may determine that Ohio's Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities is the appropriate test.

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.

The results from state tests provide the public with much-needed information about how all students are performing. Student test scores are the foundation of Ohio's A-F school and district report cards, which are designed to show parents, taxpayers and school leaders how well students are performing.

The report cards allow for apples to apples comparisons between schools as well as identify schools and districts that require additional support or interventions, such as:

1. Offering more grant funding for struggling schools;
2. Relieving high-performing schools and districts of some regulations;
3. Creating school choice options, like charter schools and voucher programs; or
4. Closing poor-performing schools.

Ohio also uses state tests as checkpoints for students to ensure they are ready for their next steps. The Third Grade Reading Guarantee makes sure students can read at grade level before moving on to the fourth grade. Ohio's new graduation options give flexibility to students on which state tests they use, but the tests ensure that students leave high school ready for college and careers.

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