

Glossary of Tests

Call them what you want – tests, assessments, exams – teachers use them every day to gain valuable insight and feedback on what and how students are learning.



Local or Classroom Assessments



Formative assessments

These are daily evaluations and observations teachers make about how well and how much students are learning. Teachers ask questions during the course of a lesson and review student work. Most students don't even know these assessments are happening, but teachers use them to guide important decisions such as whether or not students need extra help or whether or not he/she should try a different instructional technique.

Summative assessments

These are things like midterms, final exams, projects and research papers. Very often, these assessments are a significant factor in a student's final grade for a course. Some summative assessments are designed locally by individual teachers or groups of teachers in a grade or subject area, while others are developed by textbook or curriculum companies and are meant to align with the teaching tools being used in the classroom.

Statewide Assessments



NYS Grade 3-8 Assessments

Under state and federal law, students in grades 3-8 complete state ELA and math assessments annually. Fourth and eighth grade students are also tested in science. These state-wide exams measure student proficiency against the state's learning standards. While results on these exams are not factored into student grades, they are used to help teachers identify individual student needs and ensure that local school districts are providing appropriate and effective educational programs.

RCTs and NYSAA

New York offers these testing options – the Regents Competency Tests (RCTs) and the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) – for students with disabilities. The RCT is for students who do not meet Regents requirements but are eligible for a local diploma. The NYSAA measures progress toward meeting state learning standards for students with severe cognitive disabilities.

Regents Exams

These high school standardized exams, specific to New York state, are offered in the core subject areas of social studies, science, math, ELA and foreign language. Students must meet the state's Regents requirements in order to graduate, with some exceptions for students with disabilities. Students who choose to complete Regents exams beyond what is required may also receive a diploma with honor or an advanced designation.

NYSITELL and NYSESLAT

Under federal law, states are required to help students whose native language is not English gain proficiency with the English language. The New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) is used to determine what services non-English speaking students require. The New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) is used to measure the annual progress in the areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing among English language learners.

Other Assessments



College entrance exams

Students who plan to attend a two- or four-year college can expect to take at least one college entrance exam while in high school. The two major exams used to measure college-readiness skills in the U.S. are the SAT and ACT.

National and international tests administered in the U.S. and around the world

Exams such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) are administered to select students around the world from time to time in various subject areas. While results from these exams typically aren't used to gauge individual student, teacher, school or district performance, they are used to measure national and international learning trends.

Exams of advanced study

Many high schools offer students the opportunity to take advanced coursework, some of which can lead to college credit based on final exam results. These include Advanced Placement (AP) courses and corresponding exams and the International Baccalaureate (IB) program.

Field tests

Field tests give educators an opportunity to "test the test," evaluating the quality of the test questions, as well as the effectiveness of training materials and administrative procedures. Field test results are used

by test developers and have no impact on student academic records or school/district accountability. However, these tests are used to improve the quality and effectiveness of future assessments.

