

TESTING 123

Updates for teachers from the MDE Statewide Testing Division

[August 12, 2019]

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Testing 1-2-3 Website Launch

[Testing 1, 2, 3](#) has officially launched just in time for back to school planning. While the website has been available throughout its development, it will now be used and referenced more widely. The site has been redesigned based on teacher feedback to help Minnesota educators better understand how to use assessment data to inform instruction and decisions. Each month, a new resource or page from the site will be featured in this update to highlight the resources available for teachers on the new site.

If you would like to request online or in-person professional development related to the resources on the site—contact Kendra Olsen at kendra.olsen@state.mn.us.

New Benchmark Reports for 2019

The MCA Benchmark Reports have been redesigned for 2019 and will be available on Sept. 16. The new reports use a different calculation method to measure and report school- and district-level performance on each benchmark assessed from the Minnesota Academic Standards for the current year. Benchmark reports are produced for each grade level for the Reading, Mathematics, and Science MCAs. For the 2019 test administration, MDE and Pearson worked with various stakeholders to redesign the reports to make them easier to understand and use more effectively.

On the new reports, benchmark performance is calculated by comparing student performance on the MCA at the school or district to the expected performance of the “Meets” achievement level—in other words, how those students who perform at the “Meets” achievement level on the test would likely perform on the particular items for a given benchmark.

The benchmark reports are designed to be an additional resource educators can use to identify benchmarks within a grade and subject for which a school or district show performance less than, similar to, and greater than the current year’s MCA relative to the “Meets” achievement level. When analyzing a benchmark report, it is important to have conversations about the full educational experience and consider other factors, such as curriculum, instructional practices, and all local assessments. Each benchmark report has three sections to help your school or district put the information in context:

- Overall performance, by achievement level, for the school, district, and state
- Performance by strand/substrand for the school, district, and state
- Performance by benchmark within strands or substrands

New and improved resources will be available to support districts in the appropriate use and understanding of the benchmark reports. The *Benchmark Report Interpretive Guide* is already available on the [Additional Reporting Resources page](#). Note that in the *Benchmark Report Interpretive Guide*, there is a reference and link to the *Benchmark Report Calculations Resource*, which is not yet available. Other resources are listed below:

- *Benchmark Report “How To” Quick Guides* for each subject (scheduled to be available in mid-August)
- *Benchmark Report Calculation Resource* (scheduled to be available in late August)
- *Benchmark Report Video Guide* (scheduled to be available in mid-September)
- Webinars (to be scheduled for September)

Note: Benchmark report resources from previous test administrations are still available on PearsonAccess Next, but will be removed on Monday, Aug. 26.

For additional questions or to request professional development or support, contact MDE’s Outreach Specialist, Kendra Olsen, at Kendra.Olsen@state.mn.us or 651-582-8542.

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Featured Resource of the Month: Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) and Achievement Level Descriptor Maps

As you plan for the upcoming school year, you might be reviewing the depth and breadth of the curriculum for your course. The ALDs and ALD Maps are helpful resources to use alongside the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards to help make informed decisions on curriculum and the scope and sequence of lessons.

The Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) are developed by Minnesota educators and describe the knowledge, skills, and abilities a student should be able to master at each achievement level for the standards. Students’ MCA results are reported by achievement level, and the ALDs present a clearer picture of a student’s level of mastery. [Learn more about ALDs.](#)

Achievement Level Descriptor *Maps* are supplementary materials to be used in conjunction with the ALDs. The ALD maps are helpful for comparing performance across proficiency levels. Additionally, they can be useful in articulating learning goals and developing more specific success criteria for teacher designed classroom assessments. [Learn more about ALD Maps.](#)

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Important Ideas and Research in Assessment and Data Literacy

This section of the newsletter is designed to keep educators well-informed on current research and best practices. In each issue, 2–4 articles will be featured that have relevant ideas to improve teaching, leadership, and learning in relation to data and assessment in the classroom.

The Future of Assessment Practices: Comprehensive and Balanced Assessment Systems

This policy paper was released in March by Susan Brookhart, Jay McTighe, Rick Stiggins, and Dylan William—leaders in the work around assessment of student learning.

On page 10 of the report, a helpful table is introduced as a recommended framework for schools and districts in their work to create a more equitable and balanced approach to assessment of student learning. The table also includes helpful questions to think about when evaluating different types of assessment at the classroom, school, and state levels, and to better understand how they all work together in a comprehensive system.

[“The Future of Assessment Practices: Comprehensive and Balanced Assessment Systems”](#) by Susan Brookhart, Jay McTighe, Rick Stiggins, and Dylan William in *Learning Sciences International*, March 2019.

What Good Feedback Really Looks Like

In this article from the *Harvard Business Review* (HBR), Craig Chappelow and Cindy McCauley (Center for Creative Leadership) refute some of the points made in a recent HBR article on feedback (“The Feedback Fallacy” by Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall, summarized in Memo 776).

Chappelow and McCauley defend the following points made previously:

- Harsh feedback doesn’t help people excel.
- Positive feedback is critical for learning.
- Telling someone how to “fix a problem” is often an ineffective approach.

They disagree in other areas and make the following points which can be applied to giving formative feedback to students:

- “Feedback is never purely objective since it is delivered from a human being with a unique perspective.”
- “When you focus only on strengths,” say Chappelow and McCauley, and avoid discussing weaknesses, “you lull people into believing there are no areas in which they need to improve.”
- Potentially devastating events, like making a serious mistake, can be key drivers for improvement.

“[What Good Feedback Really Looks Like](#)” by Craig Chappelow and Cindy McCauley in *Harvard Business Review*, May 13, 2019.

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Statewide Testing's Mission

To design, develop, and implement a system of assessment so Minnesota students, parents, teachers, administrators, legislators and taxpayers will have access to valid and reliable data to support and improve education in Minnesota.



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