

Alaska's Summative Assessments



The FACTS:

The **purpose of a summative assessment** is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit, like a school year. Summative assessment is a chance for students to demonstrate the skills and knowledge they have acquired over a school year. Alaska's statewide summative assessments are administered in grades 3-9 in math and English language arts (ELA) and in grades 5, 8, and 10 in science.

A statewide summative assessment is important for three reasons. First, these assessments provide information for parents, educators, policy makers, the community, and businesses about how Alaska's schools and districts are performing. Second, results from the assessments provide information to help all schools improve. Third, information from statewide assessments helps to ensure there is equity in education for all students. DEED's mission is to provide an excellent education to every student every day.

The summative assessment Alaska administers is called Performance Evaluation for Alaska Schools, or PEAKS. The PEAKS assessments are intended to measure the skills and concepts in the [Alaska English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards](#) adopted in 2012. The ELA and mathematics content assessments contain questions to measure Alaska's college-and-career-ready standards. The science content assessment measures concepts of the [K-12 Science Standards for Alaska](#) (<https://education.alaska.gov/standards/science>) adopted in 2019.

Alaska partners with Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) to administer PEAKS. DRC provides test items from their college- and career-ready item bank, a secure test engine, a test administration portal, and customer service to assist districts and schools in implementing technology.



Resources to help students and educators prepare for PEAKS are available. Online Tools Training (OTT) and Student Tutorials are available to aid students

and teachers in preparing for the computer-based assessment. The purpose of the OTT and Student Tutorials is to familiarize students with the testing platform and to give them an opportunity to experience the computer-based test environment and practice using the technology. For students taking the paper-based assessment, grade-level specific item samplers are available for each content area. These item samplers provide examples of items that students may encounter when taking the assessment. The item samplers, information about the OTT and Student Tutorials, and an Educator Guide to Student Preparation are all available on the [Student Preparation webpage](#).

The ELA assessment contains a Text-Dependent Analysis (TDA) item in which students will formulate a written response based on a prompt using specific evidence from a set of reading passages. TDA resources for educators can be found on the [PEAKS webpage, Text-Dependent Analysis \(TDA\) tab](#).

Student supports for students with disabilities and English learners are provided. Student supports are available for the PEAKS and Alaska Science assessments. For more information about allowable tool for all students as well as accommodations, please refer to the *Participation Guidelines for Inclusion of Students in State Assessments, July 2020* and the *Handbook for the Participation Guidelines* available on the [DEED Accommodations webpage](#).

DEED values educator's input and expertise.

Alaska educators from all districts were invited to participate in an alignment study that ensures the alignment of the assessment to the ELA and math standards, as well as review and approve items created specifically for Alaska as part of the PEAKS science assessment.

More information about Alaska's summative assessment can be found on the [PEAKS webpage](#)

Types of Assessments

Summative Assessment: designed to provide information regarding the level of student, school, or program success at an end point in time. Summative tests are administered after the conclusion of instruction. The results are used to fulfill summative functions, such as to: 1) reach an evaluative judgment about the effectiveness of a recently concluded educational program; 2) arrive at an inference about a student's mastery of the curricular aims sought during an in-class instructional sequence; 3) determine a grade for a course; or 4) meet local, state, and federal accountability requirements. Assessments referred to as summative can range from large-scale assessment systems, such as the annual assessments administered across the state, to district-wide assessment systems or tests, to classroom summative tests created by teachers. These tests are also called "outcome assessments."

Interim Assessment: typically administered periodically throughout the school year to fulfill one or more of the following functions: 1) predictive (identifying students' readiness for success on a later high-stakes tests); 2) evaluative (to appraise ongoing educational programs); and 3) instructional (to supply teachers with individual student performance data). The tests are also called "benchmark," "interim benchmark," or "common."

Universal Screening Assessments: periodically conducted, usually two or three times during a school year, to identify students who may be at risk, to monitor student progress, or to predict students' likelihood of success on meeting or exceeding curricular benchmarks. Universal screening tests are typically brief and conducted with all students at a particular grade level. They focus on target skills (for example, phonological awareness) that are highly predictive of future outcomes. These assessments are used along with other information to identify students who need more frequent or intensive opportunities to learn a skill.

Formative assessment: a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended

instructional outcomes. The critical features of effective formative assessment include: 1) clearly identified learning goals and criteria for success; 2) clearly articulated sub-goals and learning progressions; 3) evidence of learning elicited during instruction; 4) descriptive feedback provided to students and self; and 5) peer-assessment.

Definitions from "Distinguishing Formative Assessment from Other Educational Assessment Labels" CCSSO Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers (FAST) State Collaborative, 2012