

Frequently Asked Questions 2015-16 Social Studies Assessment

To what standards will the 2015-16 social studies assessments be aligned?

The 2015-16 social studies assessments are aligned to the content standards that were passed by the State Board of Education in July 2013 and went into effect during the 2014-15 school year. They are available [here](#).

Will these standards change or be revised?

The current standards will be in effect for at least the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. Once the State Board of Education shares a timeline for revising and adopting new standards it will be shared statewide.

Why are the assessments changing? How are they different from the previous ones?

The assessments have changed to better align to the new standards and to reflect the higher expectations for students, particularly the greater focus on literacy. The new standards include more primary documents, opportunities for higher cognitive demand, and additional focus on Tennessee history and civics. Geography has also been integrated through the standards. The biggest difference between the new and old assessments is the inclusion of an extended response portion (Part I), where students are asked to engage with a variety of stimuli such as maps, charts and historical texts.

Why didn't I receive results from the 2015 field test?

The 2015 field test was conducted as a stand-alone field test. The purpose of the field test was to gather statistical data on the validity of the test items. There were several different versions administered across the state in order to build a strong item bank. Items with reliable statistics will be used to build the operational test for 2016 after which the state will invite Tennessee teachers and administrators to participate in the standard-setting process, which is where they determine the levels of student proficiency. Once standards are set, we will be able to provide reports that will inform parents, students and teachers of the student's strengths and weaknesses in social studies.

Is social studies part of TNReady?

No, TNReady is the name of the new English language arts and mathematics assessment. The social studies assessment is not part of TNReady. The social studies assessment and the TNReady assessments are under the same umbrella of state-required tests in Tennessee, known as TCAP (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program). Social studies assessments will be administered in similar windows to TNReady.

What grades/subjects will take the assessments?

Students in grades 3-8 and U.S. history will take the 2015-16 social studies assessments.

What accommodations are available? Will students with an IEP take the new assessments?

As previously communicated with districts in summer 2015, the 2015-16 social studies assessments will be administered on the same MIST platform as the TNReady ELA and mathematics assessments. As a result, all of the accommodations available to students on TNReady will also be available for social studies assessments. Click [here](#) for the complete accessibility guidelines and resources to support decision making and communications.

Braille versions are available for students with an identified need. These forms will be reserved only for students with the accommodation listed in his/her IEP or 504 plan.

Will the new assessments be online or paper-pencil? What is the platform for online assessment? Who should I contact if I have questions about the online assessment?

The new assessments will be administered online through the MIST platform. As with TNReady ELA and mathematics, schools that are eligible may apply to receive a waiver for online administration. All questions should be submitted via “Contact Support” tickets on EdTools. The department will provide phone support details with administration information specific to test administration.

What types of questions will be included?

All students in grades 3-8 and U.S. history will respond to both selected response and extended response items. For the 2015-16 assessment, selected response means multiple choice with one correct answer, the same format that was included on the 2015 field test. In future year additional item types may be introduced, and will be clearly communicated in advance of appearing on any operational assessments.

What is the design of the assessments? How many parts will students take? How long will the testing sessions be? How many questions are there?

Comprehensive blueprints that detail the overall design of each grade and subject with item count ranges and percentages, as well as lists of the standards assessed in both Part I and II, are now available [here](#) under “2015-16 Test Design.” The testing times are available [here](#).

Students in grades 3-8 will have 45 minutes to complete one extended response item on Part I, and 90-100 minutes to complete 58 selected response items on Part II. Students in U.S. history will have 90 minutes to complete two extended response items on Part I (one operational and one field test), and 90 minutes (across two subtests) to complete 58 selected response items on Part II.

How is the score weighted between the two parts of the assessments? How much of the overall student score comes from literacy?

The assessment will have 60 score points total. The Part I extended response item is worth 12 points, with 8 points based on content and 4 based on literacy. Part II consists of 48 operational selected response items that are worth 1 point each, for a total of 48 points. Part I is roughly 20% of the overall student score, while Part II is roughly 80% of the overall student score. Between 5-10% of the overall student score will come from literacy.

Can I view the blueprints?

Yes. Comprehensive blueprints for all grades and subjects are available [here](#) under “2015-16 Test Design.”

Who will score the extended response items? What rubrics will be used?

Both sections of the assessment, including the multiple choice items and extended response items will be scored centrally. No local scoring will be required. The scoring process will be robust and driven by Tennessee students and educators. Educators will participate in a process called rangefinding using actual student work from Tennessee classrooms. Decisions made by the rangefinding committee will directly inform how the testing vendor trains their scorers. The rubrics that will be used are available [here](#) under “Scoring and Accountability”.

How were teachers involved in creating the new assessments?

Teachers have and will continue to be involved in each step of the process of developing the new assessments. Teachers came together in spring 2014 to draft the Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) that will serve as the basis for the standard setting process. Those PLDs are available [here](#) under “Scoring and Accountability.” Committees of teachers and supervisors from across the state have met to review and approve all of the items included on both the operational assessments and the practice materials for both content and bias.

During summer 2015, teachers completed the rangefinding process to guide the process of scoring student work from the 2015 field test. Teachers also completed a data review process where they reviewed student performance on items from the field test and made recommendations to guide the creation of test forms for the 2015-16 operational assessments.

Can teachers participate in item review?

Yes, teachers and supervisors are encouraged to apply to participate in future item and bias review committees, and information will be shared via the Commissioner’s Update for Directors and with testing coordinators via Ed Tools.

How will the proficiency levels be determined?

Proficiency levels for the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) are established using a standard setting process which involves Tennessee teachers and administrators. The standard setting process for social studies will be conducted in June/July 2016.

Are results from these assessments tied to teacher and student accountability? Will teachers receive growth scores and how will they be calculated? What about student grades?

Results from the TCAP social studies assessments will be used for accountability, TVAAS (including teacher-effect) and student grades. For 2015-2016, quick scores will be delayed as a result of the implementation of the new assessments and districts will be able to establish individual policies regarding the use of quick scores in student grades according to local needs and context.

What information will students, parents, and teachers receive once the assessments have been scored?

We believe parents deserve detailed information about what their students know and where they struggle, so they can make informed decisions for their family. Parent reports will be redesigned to provide more and better information about student performance on social studies.

The report design will involve feedback from teachers and families to ensure we are providing useful, clear information on how students are meeting expectations for college and career readiness.

Redesigned parent reports will focus on three key factors:

- Prioritize the most important information and prevent information overload
- Offer more context on student performance, including clear, actionable guidance
- Support families and educators with interpreting and acting on information

Because this is the first year of a new assessment, student reports will be distributed a little later in the school year than in previous years. Parents will receive detailed information about their child's performance from the 2015-16 school year in the fall 2016.

How can I practice for the new assessments?

In early spring 2015, the department released one practice test for each grade/ subject area to help teachers and students prepare for the new assessments. Tennessee teachers met in summer 2015 to review the practice tests, and we are now able to share revised and updated versions that reflect their edits and recommendations. They are posted in PDF format [here](#) under “Practice Resources & Training,” and we are also working to make them available on the MIST platform for student practice, as well as an additional 7-12 items per grade in MICA. We will share more information with districts this fall.

Please note that the revised practice tests contain 30 multiple choice items and 1 extended response item. While they do not mirror the length of the operational assessment, they have been designed to reflect the percentages of content listed in each blueprint. As proficiency levels will not be established until the standards-setting process is completed in summer 2016, it is not possible to use the practice tests to predict or determine student proficiency.

Additionally, teachers should prepare for the assessment by reading the blueprints ([here](#) under “Test Design”) and using that to guide their instruction and see how different eras are weighted. There will also be practice items available on MICA that will help both teachers and students prepare for what the test will look like. More information on when these items will be available will be shared statewide this fall.

What is MICA and what is MIST?

MICA (Measurement Incorporated Classroom Assessment) is a web-based practice site that teachers, students, and parents can use to practice different types of questions that will appear on the assessment. Parents can access examples of the question types on MICA by visiting support.micatime.com.

MIST (Measurement Incorporated Secured Testing) is the official platform where students will take practice tests and the operational assessments this year.

MICA mirrors the look and feel of MIST, but MIST is the actual, secured platform that students will use during the test.