

Questions and Answers about the Graduation Assessment Requirements

What are graduation assessment requirements?

In order to be eligible for a diploma from a Minnesota public high school, all students must fulfill graduation assessment requirements. Based on new legislation in 2013, these requirements have changed. This fact sheet will provide an overview of the changes in the graduation assessment requirements and focus on the Graduation-Required Assessment for Diploma (GRAD) as a route to meet the requirements. Parents/guardians should contact their child's school for further information.

What are routes to meeting state graduation assessment requirements?

There are different routes depending on what year students were first enrolled in grade 8. Districts will determine what routes will be offered and used to meet the requirements.

Students Enrolled in Grade 8 through 2011–2012

These students can meet the graduation assessment requirements by meeting the GRAD requirements in reading, mathematics and written composition, which include:

- Earning a proficient score. If students are proficient (achieve Meets or Exceeds the Standards) on the grade 10 Reading Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) and the grade 11 Mathematics MCA, they have met their graduation assessment requirement for that subject.
 - This also applies to students who take the high school MCA-Modified or Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) in place of the MCAs. [View the respective Parent Fact Sheets on the MDE website for further information on MCA-Modified and MTAS.](#) (Go to Just for Parents > Testing Information.)
- Earning a passing score on the Written Composition GRAD or Reading and Mathematics GRAD retests.
- Meeting GRAD alternate routes, which may include the following:
 - Meet mathematics alternate pathway requirements (for students in grade 8 through 2009–2010 only)
 - Receive an individual passing score (for students on an IEP or 504 plan)
 - Receive an English Learner (EL) exemption
 - Pass an accountability assessment from another state approved by MDE

The new legislation also allows students to take the ACT assessment for college admission; the WorkKeys job skills assessment, the Compass college placement test, or the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (or ASVAB) to meet graduation assessment requirements in reading, mathematics and writing.

A school district may also substitute a score from an alternative, equivalent assessment to satisfy the graduation assessment requirements.

Students Enrolled in Grade 8 in 2012–2013 and Later

These students will meet graduation assessment requirements through the career and college assessment system, which will first be administered in school year 2014–2015. The career and college assessment system will consist of a grade 8 and 10 Career and College Assessment and grade 11 College Entrance Assessment. Students not yet academically ready for a career or college based on their growth in academic achievement between grades 8 and 10 must take the college placement diagnostic exam before taking the college entrance assessment in grade 11. Additional information about these assessments will be provided when it is available.

What happens if a student is not proficient on the MCA in the first attempt?

Students do not pass or fail the reading and mathematics tests. Each student receives a score that falls in one of four achievement levels—Does Not Meet the Standards, Partially Meets the Standards, Meets the Standards and Exceeds the Standards. Students who are not proficient on the Reading or Mathematics MCA, MCA-Modified or MTAS and therefore do not meet the graduation assessment requirements will have numerous opportunities to take a GRAD retest online during the retest windows, take one of the other assessments (ACT, WorkKeys, Compass or ASVAB) or have or receive a score on an equivalent assessment that is district determined.

Students who do not pass the Written Composition GRAD will be able to take a retest twice a year. Check with your student's school for retest options available in your district.

What are the Reading GRAD and Mathematics GRAD retests?

The Reading GRAD retest consists of several passages and 40 multiple-choice questions. The stand-alone Mathematics GRAD retest consists of 40 multiple-choice questions. Both of these tests are administered online. The passing scale score is 50 or higher.

What is the Written Composition GRAD retest?

A student writes to one prompt. The Written Composition GRAD retest student essays are scored by trained professionals using a holistic rubric. The range of possible scores is 1 through 6: the passing score is 3 or higher.

What are the ACT, WorkKeys, Compass, ASVAB or other District-Determined Equivalent Assessments?

ACT is an assessment for college admission, the WorkKeys is a job skills assessment, the Compass is a college placement test and ASVAB is the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. One of these assessments or a score from an alternative, equivalent assessment can be used to satisfy the graduation assessment requirements. These assessments are not developed by the Minnesota Department of Education but are nationally recognized assessments.

How can students prepare for the GRAD retests?

The “Test Preparation Suggestions for Parents and Teachers” handout is available on the MDE website with tips on content preparation, general test-taking strategies and using a calculator. [View the Test Preparation handout on the MDE website](#). (Go to Just for Parents > Testing Information.)

Other sources that may be helpful are the GRAD item samplers and Reading and Mathematics GRAD retest student tutorial.

- 1) Item samplers help students become familiar with the format of the test and provide examples of the types of questions that are on the test. You can find item samplers for each grade and subject on the Minnesota Assessments portal (www.mnstateassessments.org). [View the item samplers on the Minnesota Assessments portal](#).
- 2) The student tutorial shows students how to navigate through the tests, how to use tools in the online test and how to answer test questions. [View the student tutorial on the Minnesota Assessment portal](#). (Go to www.mnstateassessments.org > Resources > Student Resources.)

For more information, contact:

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