

Forward Exam, ACT, PreACT Secure, and DLM Assessments 2023-24 Assessment Data Release Suggested Talking Points for Schools and Districts

Big Picture Summary

- Statewide assessments provide a common measure of student achievement across schools and districts in the state.
- Updated Forward Exam English language arts (ELA) and mathematics tests were administered this spring. Results for these tests are reported on a new scale and with updated performance levels. Consider 2024 the first year of a new trend when comparing student performance with other years in these content areas.
- The ACT with writing and PreACT Secure state performance levels were also updated in English language arts, mathematics and science to ensure coherent reporting and accountability, however, the underlying scores didn't change. It is possible to compare scores across years, however, as with the Forward Exam, consider 2024 the first year of a new trend for proficiency rates.
- Districts with low participation rates should use caution when interpreting student summary reports and making cross-year comparisons, especially when the group of students who tested is not representative of the overall population of students.
- Assessment results should be used in conjunction with other data to drive school improvement.

The Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS) exams accounted for in this release of annual statewide assessment data include:

- Wisconsin Forward Exam:
 - Grades 3-8: measures performance in ELA and mathematics
 - Grades 4 and 8: measures performance in science
 - Grades 4, 8, and 10: measures performance in social studies
- The ACT with writing: Grade 11: measures performance in ELA (English, reading, and writing), mathematics, and science (same college admissions exam taken by students nationwide).
- PreACT Secure: Grades 9 and 10: measures performance in ELA, mathematics, and science and is predictive of ACT performance.

- Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM): alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities.
 - Grades 3-11: measures performance in ELA and mathematics
 - Grades 4 and 8-11: measures performance in science
 - Grades 4, 8, and 10: measures performance in social studies

Standard Setting and Performance Level Updates

- Recent revisions to Wisconsin’s ELA and mathematics [academic standards](#) meant an update was needed to the Forward Exam design to align to the academic standards. The following revisions went into effect during the 2023-24 administration of the standardized assessment.
 - Revisions to writing items
 - Removal of the listening session
 - Reporting reading and writing on the ELA scale
 - Focus on mathematics primary standards
- Every time there are revisions to academic standards, a corresponding performance standard-setting process is required to update cut scores. The last standard setting occurred in 2015.
- Educators from around the state participated in the performance standard setting process to recommend updated cut scores to the State Superintendent. These cut scores separate students into four performance levels (Developing, Approaching, Meeting, and Advanced). The performance levels provide a snapshot of students’ progress in learning grade level skills and content using language intended to encourage and motivate student learning.
- Cut scores were updated to accurately reflect how Wisconsin kids are performing. And it’s a chance to remind folks that a test score on one given day is one measure of a learner’s success, and not the only measure.

Tips for Districts

- Review other measures of performance in your district to draw a more complete picture of learning.
- Review your district’s participation rates when examining performance trends. Varying participation rates may impact the interpretation of results and comparability to previous years.
- Review DPI resources such as the sample parent letter, press release, *2023-24 Wisconsin Statewide Assessments: Things to Know, Assessment Data 2023-24 Interpretation Guide*, and data dashboards in [WISEdash](#).