

Tennessee High School Students Set New Baseline with First Year of TNReady Results Friday

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Education Commissioner Candice McQueen announced the results from the first year of TNReady today, following an extended scoring process that was led by Tennessee educators. With the new results, Tennessee high school students have set a new baseline for future growth based on new, educator-developed expectations that will better ensure all students are on track to graduate prepared for college and careers. Overall, students' performance on TNReady reflects the readiness they showed on national tests like the ACT. TNReady scores fell into one of four new achievement levels, which were created through public feedback: mastered, on-track, approaching, and below. The new categories aim to help teachers and parents more easily understand if students are ready for the next step in their academic journey and identify which students may need additional support — which is the goal of state assessments. Along with the new achievement levels, high school families and teachers will receive new score reports to help them support their students.

“TNReady provides us with a unique window into Tennessee students' growth. For the first time, we are able to provide educators, families, and students with better information about where students truly are on their path to college and careers,” McQueen said. “Tennessee's students are growing into problem solvers and critical thinkers, and they are rising to meet the higher standards that are based on what our colleges and employers expect. We expected scores to be lower in this first year of a more rigorous assessment, but we also expect that scores will rebound over time as all students grow to meet these higher expectations—just as we have seen in the past.”

In 2015-16, 228,287 high school students took at least one of the End of Course exams, which are the only tests for which there are results due to the suspension of testing in grades 3-8. Students took new TNReady assessments in three subjects: English language arts, math, and social studies.

Generally, on the three English End of Course assessments, 8.3 percent of students are considered as having mastered their End of Course exam, 22 percent are on track, 42.4 percent are approaching, and 27.3 percent are below course expectations. In high school math—which includes the traditional algebra I, algebra II, and geometry courses and the integrated math series—3.7 percent of students are considered mastered, 17.1 percent are on track, 26.2 percent are approaching, and 53 percent are below expectations. On the U.S. history End of Course test, 9.5 percent of students are considered mastered, 20.4 percent are on track, 34.6 percent are approaching, and 35.5 percent are below expectations. Gaps in student achievement widened among different student groups. In science, the two exams in biology and chemistry were similar to previous End of Course assessments but introduced a time limit. On those assessments, which

use the old achievement levels, overall 15.8 percent of students are advanced, 33 percent of students are proficient, 26.8 percent of students score as basic, and 24.4 percent of students are below basic.

Tennessee students have shown similar results on other national exams that look at postsecondary readiness. For example, the percentages of students who scored in the combined mastered and on track categories on TNReady are similar to the percentages of students who met the ACT's readiness benchmarks. In 2016, 34 percent of Tennessee public school students met ACT's college readiness benchmark in reading, and 27 percent of Tennessee students met that mark in math. Overall, 17 percent of students met all four of ACT's college readiness benchmarks in 2016. Students' achievement scores from the first year of TNReady cannot be compared to previous years' results from the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) because TNReady has more challenging questions and is based on a different, more rigorous set of expectations developed by Tennessee educators. TNReady looks at students' problem solving abilities and critical thinking skills, and it includes different types of questions, including some for which students did not have answers to choose from, like short response and fill in the blank. For the first time, writing was included as a component in students' English scores, and students were not allowed to use a calculator on parts of the math assessment in order to determine the depth of their understanding. Additionally, there were new End of Course tests this year that had not been offered in the past.

These adjustments help to ensure that all students are being prepared for postsecondary goals. "These results are an opportunity, and we want our teachers, families, and students to know we will all grow from here," McQueen said. "In past transitions to more rigorous expectations, while scores dropped initially, they rose over the long term — and students performed better on national assessments, including by making our state the fastest improving in the country.

Tennessee students and teachers have a growth mindset and are looking to improve each year. That focus will continue from this new baseline." District, high school, and high school student results will be shared with districts, schools, students, and parents in mid-November, and district and school results will be published on the state report card in December. Teacher evaluation data will also be available for educators later this month. Updates and more information about TNReady, including graphics that break down state-level student performance in individual subjects, can be found at TNReady.gov. District-level results will not be available until later this year. For media inquiries, please contact Sara Gast at Sara.Gast@tn.gov and (615) 532-6260.