

The Maine Education Assessments (MEA): Why Participation Matters



Why does Maine have a standardized test?

Federal requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) require Maine to administer a standardized test. This is one of many requirements that enable Maine to accept more than \$70 Million in federal funding for Maine schools.

How are scores used?

The state-level standardized assessments are only one academic measurement of how students are performing. There are many other forms of evaluation that help educators and schools determine how students are doing in school, academically, socially, and emotionally. MEAs can be useful as one small part of a much bigger picture of student achievement and of school success.

What is required?

Students in grades 3-8 and in their 3rd year of high school are required to participate in the MEAs. ESSA requires that 95% of students (who are eligible to test) participate. Maine has selected assessments that are relatively brief (in comparison to tests provided by other states), provide a summative measure, and that are only implemented once per year.

What if Maine does not reach 95% participation?

Maine could receive less federal funds for Maine schools that are experiencing significant challenges. Participation rates lower than 95% can also skew performance data for the school.

What about students with disabilities?

Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are assessed with an alternate assessment. Federal requirements do not allow greater than 1% of the population to participate in the alternate assessment. This could also result in an impact on federal funds. Should a state exceed the 1% cap, a waiver can be requested from U.S. DOE. A pre-requisite of applying for the waiver is 95% participation in the MEAs.

Where does the data come from?

Participation rate data comes from the annual spring assessment results and Maine DOE student records. The Maine DOE utilizes district reported enrollment data and aligns it with participation in the MEAs for each of the applicable grades.

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