

# Answers to the tests

Spring is the season when Minnesota schools administer a number of tests. Mounds View Public Schools believes families deserve clarity about spring exams. Here are answers to the most commonly asked questions about testing.

## Which grade levels participate in spring testing?

- Students in grades K-8 participate in the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measure of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) assessment in reading and mathematics.
- Students in grades 3-8, 10 and 11 take the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA-III) in reading, mathematics and science (grades 5, 8 and 10).
- All Mounds View Public Schools students take the ACT exam as 11th-graders.

## What do tests measure?

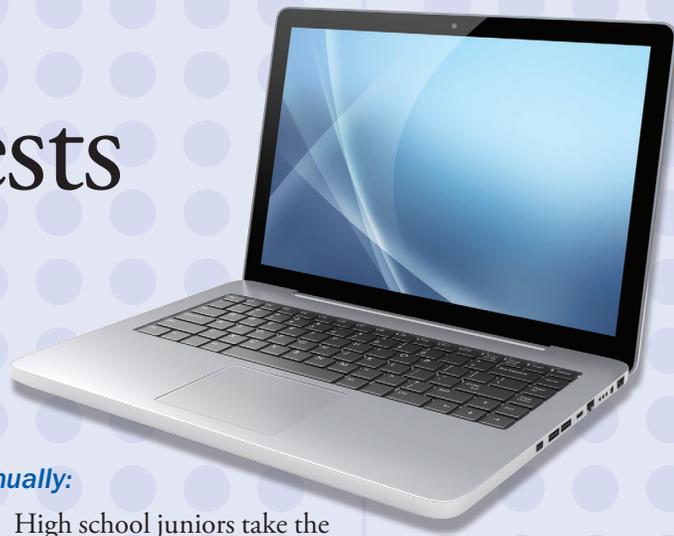
MCA-III and NWEA MAP tests are frequently administered in the spring; however, there are important differences between these tests. Like all Minnesota public school districts, Mounds View is required by the state to administer MCA-III exams. **MCA-III exams measure a student's proficiency** on the state standards. In addition, Mounds View administers NWEA tests to all grade K-8 students one time a year. **NWEA MAP tests measure individual student growth**, and they assist teachers in targeting instruction to meet the needs of students.

## When are tests administered?

High-achieving districts like Mounds View regularly use data to respond to the needs of their students. Tests and assessments are used to measure student performance and progress throughout the year. These **assessments are essential** to monitoring student progress, tracking growth, achieving long-term academic goals and being prepared for post-secondary opportunities.

### Throughout the year:

- Teachers use formative assessments throughout the school year to ensure all students are learning and growing in academic areas.



### Annually:

- High school juniors take the ACT exam in April. Mounds View Public Schools was the first district in the state to offer this nationally recognized college entrance exam to all 11th-graders during the school day at no cost.
- NWEA MAP assessment is administered to all K-8 students each spring. Sometimes a student may take the NWEA MAP additional times throughout the year as teachers monitor the student's progress.

### Spring:

- Students take standardized tests each year as part of federal and state statutes. The timeframe in which MCA-III state-mandated tests must be administered is March through May. Students in grades 3-8 and in grades 10 and 11 take the MCA-III assessment.

To better understand a specific school's spring testing schedule, please contact the school's principal.

## How are test results used?

Teachers view tests as a way to honor students' work and highlight the learning and growth that has occurred over a period of time. While testing is not the only tool used to monitor proficiency and growth, it is an important tool used to:

- Monitor student growth patterns exhibited across time.
- Identify individual student's current level of skills and academic strengths and areas for growth.
- Assist teachers in targeting instruction for each student.
- Help determine student placement in District programs.

## More information

Mounds View Public Schools is playing an active role in working with the state to redesign and reduce the state-testing requirements. If you have any questions about this work or about a test at your school, please contact the school principal or Mary Roden, assistant director of assessment, at [mary.roden@moundsvIEWSchools.org](mailto:mary.roden@moundsvIEWSchools.org), 651-621-6042.

Please visit [www.moundsvIEWSchools.org/assessments](http://www.moundsvIEWSchools.org/assessments) for more information.

	MCA-III	NWEA (MAP)
<b>“How often is it given?”</b>	Once per year (March - May)	All students take a minimum of one time each spring but may take it up to four times per year (fall, winter, spring and summer) as teachers monitor the student’s progress.
<b>“When are results available?”</b>	Teachers receive results right away. Parents can access results 1-2 weeks after the test is taken by logging into the parent portal, ParentVUE. A paper copy of results is mailed by the state in September or October.	Teachers receive the results immediately after the student completes the exam. Parents can also access the results the day after the exam is administered by logging into the parent portal, ParentVUE. An individual report is sent home at the close of each testing window.
<b>“Who takes it?”</b>	Students in grades 3–8, 10 and 11 take the reading and math portion of the exam. Students in grades 5, 8, and High School Life Science also take the science assessment.	Students in grades K-8 and selected 9–12 students participate in the reading and math assessment.
<b>“How is it administered?”</b>	Computerized	Computerized
<b>“What does it measure?”</b>	Student, school and District performance on Grade Level academic standards in reading, mathematics and science.	Individual student growth and academic performance in reading and mathematics.
<b>“How is it used?”</b>	System accountability: Measures how students are meeting the Minnesota Academic Standards and determines if individual schools and the entire district is making progress in academic proficiency, growth, and closing the achievement gap as defined by the Minnesota Department of Education.	Measuring individual student growth; Identifying individual student’s academic strengths and growth areas; Assists teachers in targeting instruction for students; One of many indicators used in course placement for mathematics, ELA and Early College Seminar.

## Positive Strategies for Taking Tests

Positive thinking is a powerful tool for success. When participating in the standardized assessment, students can increase their success by remembering to be positive and relaxed:

Parents can help too! Be positive and encouraging so your child feels relaxed and confident at test time.

- ⊗ Tell yourself you will do well.
- ⊗ Think about successes you have had, things you do well and times you have felt happy. This will increase your confidence as well.
- ⊗ Remember that this test is only one indicator of your academic skills.
- ⊗ Take a few slow, deep breaths, sit up straight and just relax.