



Top 10 Things to Know about the 2014-15 Mississippi Accountability Results

- 1) The accountability model, as set by state law in 2013, assigns schools and districts letter grades on an A-F scale. The model used to calculate the 2014-15 grades was the same model used for the 2013-14 grades.
- 2) Each school and district received two letter grades, like last year. One grade is the official or “waiver” letter grade and the other is the “non-waiver” grade.
- 3) This year’s results reflect the **final year of a waiver** from the U.S. Department of Education to compensate for the state transitioning to higher standards of learning and new state tests. The waiver allows a school to retain the letter grade it received in the 2013-14 school year if the 2014-15 grade is lower as a result of assessment results. Starting with the 2015-16 school year, there will be no waiver in effect.
- 4) **For the 2014-15 school year**, the overall school and district grades **should not be compared** to prior years because the state transitioned from less rigorous state tests in 2013-14 to more academically challenging tests in 2014-15.
- 5) Mississippi students are taking **more challenging tests than in years past**. They are not the simple fill-in-the bubble end-of-year exams. These tests ask questions that require students to explain their reasoning. They measure more complex, real-world skills, such as critical-thinking, writing, and problem solving.
- 6) We are holding students to **a much higher standard** so they can be successful in college or the workforce.
- 7) School and district performance **will improve over time**. Anytime the bar is raised for learning, student performance dips, but as students and teachers get used to the new tests, achievement will increase.
- 8) Schools and districts are **doing an outstanding job of teaching students** to a higher standard of learning. **How do we know?**
 - a. Mississippi’s fourth grade **reading and math scores improved** on the latest Nation’s Report Card, the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Mississippi was the **only state** to show significant improvement since 2013 in both reading and math scores among fourth graders.
 - b. Mississippi’s **graduation rate reached an all-time high** of 80.8 percent, up from 78.4 percent the previous year. At this rate of growth, we could surpass the national rate of 82 percent by next year.



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- c. The state's **drop-out rate fell** to 11.8 percent from 12.8 percent the previous year, continuing the downward trend from 16.7 percent in 2011-12.
 - d. In 3rd grade, **87 percent of students passed the 3rd grade reading** assessment on their first try, which is **an increase** from 85 percent last year. Students must pass this test to qualify for promotion to the 4th grade.
 - e. For the second year in a row, our Kindergarten Readiness Assessment results showed that the **majority of kindergarteners made significant gains during the academic year**, with the average statewide score exceeding the previous school year's score.
 - f. Statewide, **63 percent of kindergarteners met or exceeded the end-of-the-year target score** that categorizes them as transitional readers. Students scoring at this level are beginning to read unfamiliar words and easy reader material, but are not yet independent readers. Last year, 54 percent of kindergarteners achieved the transitional reader score.
 - g. The assessment of kindergarten readiness among students in the state's Early Learning Collaboratives show that **all 11 collaboratives achieved the target score that indicates students are prepared for kindergarten**. At the student-level, 71.4 percent of pre-K students met the target readiness score, which is an increase from 59 percent in 2015.
- 9) Mississippi Assessment Program (MAP) scores for the 2015-16 school year are expected to be released in August, and school and district accountability grades will be released in October.
- 10) We believe that higher standards and more challenging assessments will better help students achieve their full potential. Your support of our schools and districts as we continue to take on the challenge of lifting student achievement in Mississippi is greatly valued and appreciated.