

The following Q&A provides responses to questions received by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education from lawmakers during the current legislative session. The information will be updated regularly on the Department's website at [dese.mo.gov](http://dese.mo.gov). For more information, please contact the Department's Director of Legislative Outreach, Constance Rush, at [constance.rush@dese.mo.gov](mailto:constance.rush@dese.mo.gov), or call 573-751-3527.

Find out more about the Department's Top 10 by 20 initiative, which is aimed at improving student achievement in Missouri to rank among the top 10 states in the country by 2020. Subscribe to the Top 10 by 20 newsletter at <http://dese.mo.gov/communications/top-10-by-20-newsletter>.

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### **Assessment, including ACT and HiSET**

#### ***What is our Missouri test regimen?***

*State law (§160.518, RSMo) compels the State Board of Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to annually measure "by grade level a student's knowledge of academic subjects." Additionally, federal education law (PART A – Subpart 1 – Section 1111(b)(2)(I)(ii)) requires that states and school districts test 95 percent of students on year-end tests in grades 3-8 and for end-of-course tests in high school.*

*These are the current tests in Missouri:*

***Grade Level Assessments*** – Annual English Language Arts and Mathematics assessments are administered in grades 3 through 8. Science assessments are administered in grades 5 and 8.

***End-Of-Course Assessments*** – End-of-Course Assessments in Algebra I (or Algebra II, if applicable), English II, Biology, and Government are administered prior to high school graduation. Personal Finance is available for district use when offering personal finance content embedded in another course or when students are testing out of personal finance.

***ACT*** – The ACT was first administered to all grade 11 students in Missouri this school year.

***\*\*For students eligible to take the MAP-Alternative Assessment, as determined by the student's IEP team, grade level assessments, end-of-course assessments, and the ACT are not administered. Instead, the alternate assessment is administered in English Language Arts and Mathematics in grades 3 through 12 (Grade 12 is optional for 2014-2015) and Science in grades 5, 8, and 11.***

***ACCESS for English Language Learners (ELLs)*** – ACCESS is the English language proficiency assessment that Missouri has selected to meet the requirement of No Child Left Behind to annually assess Missouri's students who are eligible for ELL services. ACCESS stands for Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners. ACCESS assesses the academic English language proficiency of students in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Results also are calculated to determine if the district has met the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives.

**May non-public school students take the ACT?**

The Missouri Assessment Program gives districts the flexibility to administer statewide assessments to students who reside within district boundaries, but are not enrolled in the district. These students include those who attend private schools and those students who are homeschooled. Districts may allow private school and homeschooled students to participate in the Grade-Level, End-of-Course, and ACT assessments. Those student scores will not affect district accountability.

**Do districts and charter schools participating in the Missouri Options Program pay the students' costs to register for and take the HiSET, or do students pick up this cost?**

Each district or charter participating in the MO Option program sets its own policy regarding who will pay for the HiSET testing fees (the LEA, the student, or both).

**Why are new assessments necessary?**

Whenever academic standards are updated, assessments must be updated to test the new expectations of student learning. The new tests also are being developed in response to the feedback from educators, parents and employers who want assessments that better measure students' critical-thinking and problem-solving skills and their ability to communicate clearly.

**Why has Missouri moved toward a computer-based testing methodology?**

Online testing provides quicker, more accurate results, with scores returned to districts within 10 business days for grade-level assessments and five working days for end-of-course assessments. This quicker response time allows teachers to help struggling students or support students who excel while the students are still in the class. *In addition, computer-based testing prepares students for 21<sup>st</sup> century test-taking as technology continues to grow.* End-of-course assessments have been administered online for several years, and the new grade-level tests will offer the same type of format. For more information about the online tests, please click on this link: <http://goo.gl/UoVi96>.

**How does the quality of this test and its tools compare to those in other states?**

The new tests feature technology enhanced items which are more engaging features for our "digital native" population than paper-and-pencil tests. These are children who have never known a world without Internet connectivity. Each test will include questions that have been written and reviewed extensively by educators in each of the states in the Smarter Balanced Consortium, including Missouri. The assessments include more tools, supports, and accommodations than any state could provide on its own.

**How do cut scores this year compare to last year?**

The Spring 2014 MAP assessment and the Spring 2015 assessment are different tests, based on different standards. The cut scores are not comparable. Because of the new content expectations tested this year and a new online test format, it's possible that proficiency rates will go down. It doesn't mean that students are doing worse, but that the tests are more demanding. As students become more familiar with the test format and teachers adapt instruction to the higher content expectations, we expect to see scores improve. We've seen this happen in states such as Kentucky where scores initially dipped and have steadily increased ever since.

**How much is the cost difference in testing between last year and this year?**

There is a cost difference of \$11,013,485, which includes funding for the assessments themselves, plus staffing, support, and new educator resources that provide additional tools for gauging student performance. The cost also includes test development. The previous test form had been used for eight years, and a new test will address concerns that Missouri needs assessments that better measure students' critical thinking, problem-solving and communication skills.

**How much is our state spending on the Smarter Balanced Assessment tests? Will local school districts be responsible for paying for the testing?**

We expect the cost of the total grade-level testing program (*not including EOCs and ACT*) to be \$17,500,000. That includes a digital resource library used by more than 50,000 Missouri teachers to enhance classroom teaching. It also includes the transition to online testing to give schools, students and parents quicker results so struggling students may receive support sooner. The cost includes all grade level test items in English language arts and mathematics in a technology enhanced format more familiar to so called “digital natives,” students who have never known a time when there wasn’t Internet access.

School districts continue to contribute \$1.80 per child per grade tested as they have for many years.

**It has been stated that the multistate consortium developed the tests for Common Core. Can you provide more information about the multistate consortium?**

Missouri was one of a group of states that worked together to develop formative, interim and summative English language arts and mathematics assessment resources. The individual states took the resources and deployed them in their state using their own vendor to insure that states retain control of their data. Detailed information may be found at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/about/>.

**How is DESE supporting district implementation of the new assessment?**

The Department and the test vendor are providing technical support *from our Assessment Section and the vendor’s subcontractor, Data Recognition Corporation. Districts have reported very few problems with the computer-based assessments.* A study completed by MOREnet in 2014 showed that very few districts lacked the technology needed for implementation of online assessments. While \$10 million was requested for broadband expansion for the districts, those funds did not receive legislative approval.

**What is the refusal policy for the MAP/SBAC testing?**

Missouri does not have a process for students to "opt out" of statewide assessments. Missouri school districts are compelled by state and federal statute along with state board of education rule 5 CSR 20-200.210 to assess all students enrolled in the district. Local school boards are required to have an established written policy regarding student participation in state assessments per §160.570, RSMo. The policy shall be provided to students and parents at the beginning of each school year, and a copy shall be kept in the district office and available for public viewing during business hours.

**Data**

***Are there laws and policies regulating student assessment data? Where are the data kept?***

*The student’s assessment data are housed in three locations. The data are housed with the testing vendor as part of the test administration, locally with the school district, and at the State Department of Education. All three entities are required to follow the requirements outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>.*

*Additionally, the Department has a Data Access and Management Policy that can be found on the web at this location: <http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/MODataAccessandUsePolicy.pdf>.*

***Can parents review their children’s assessment scores/data?***

*Should parent wish to review their children’s assessment records, they should contact their local school district.*

**Fiscal Notes**

**Can the Department give me a fiscal note for my bill?**

The fiscal note process is governed by [§23.140, RSMo.](#)

**Teacher Retirement**

**Why does DESE fine retired teachers for substitute teaching more than 550 hours in a month?**

DESE does not fine substitute teachers, nor does it regulate teacher retirement. The [Public School Retirement System](#) is the appropriate regulatory authority on retirement for public school teachers.

**Transfers**

**If a school district that only has a K-8 school sends its high school kids to a neighboring district, do they pay tuition to that neighboring school district?**

Yes, under §167.131, RSMo. SCS HB 42 proposes language to clarify the policy and distinguish it from student transfers from unaccredited school districts.

**If a sending K-8 district pays tuition, does the receiving school also get Federal Funds for having a student in their school?**

Federal funds, such as Title I, stay with the resident district.

**How many students transferred from Riverview Gardens and Normandy during the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years?**

The final transfer numbers for 2013-14:

Riverview Gardens: 1,108

Normandy: 945

The transfer numbers for 2014-15:

Riverview Gardens: 741

Normandy: 426

**How much tuition is charged by each receiving district?**

Districts	Normandy All Grades	Normandy Elementary	Normandy Middle	Normandy High School	Normandy Average	Riverview Average All Grades
Brentwood	\$7,236					\$17,650
Clayton		\$18,922.60	\$20,193.61	\$20,480.32	\$19,865.51	\$19,459
Ferguson-Florissant	\$10,646.96					\$10,772
Ft. Zumwalt						\$9,686
Francis Howell	\$11,421.39					\$11,421
Hancock	\$7,250					\$7,250

Place						
Hazelwood	\$7,236					\$7,236
Jennings						\$7,236
Kirkwood		\$11,473	\$11,996		\$11,734.50	\$11,856
Ladue		\$15,832.05	\$14,832.05	\$14,832.05	\$15,165.38	\$14,832
Lindbergh	\$7,236					\$7,236
Maplewood- Richmond Heights	\$7,236					\$9,440
Mehlville						\$8,006
Orchard Farms						\$7,110
Parkway		\$11,699.36	\$12,466.68	\$12,968.73	\$12,378.26	\$7,236
Pattonville	\$14,049.12					\$14,049
Ritenour	\$9,907.12					\$9,907
Rockwood						\$10,382
St. Charles		\$15,194.26	\$14,262.04	\$15,327.73	\$14,928.01	\$14,730
St. Louis Public						\$7,236
University City		\$12,413	\$13,283	\$14,831	\$13,509	\$7,236
Webster Groves	\$7,236					\$7,236
Wentzville						\$9,220

### **Hold Harmless**

#### **How many hold harmless districts are there? Which districts are designated as hold harmless?**

There are 196 hold harmless districts in Missouri as of January 2015. Find the list here:

<http://dese.mo.gov/files/hold-harmless-districtspdf>.

*Note: Small school hold harmless is defined as a student enrollment below 350. Large school hold harmless is a student enrollment of more than 350.*

### **State Schools**

#### **How much do local school districts pay to support students from their districts who attend the state schools?**

Local school districts are billed for the local tax effort for their students based on the number of days of attendance.

#### **Why are forgiveness days used differently in state schools than they are in local school districts?**

To ensure student safety, each of the state schools is permitted to conduct or close school based on the weather conditions in their area of the state. Almost all students are bused from the doorstep of their homes to the state school. Some of the homes are down long gravel roads not cleared by state or county highway departments. Many of the children are medically fragile, so it is important that the Building Administrators (the equivalent of building principals) take into account all weather conditions (including extreme cold) in making their judgments. The Department keeps close track of attendance to ensure accuracy of billing the local school

district, ensuring the schools are meeting the requirements of each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), and fulfilling the responsibilities owed to the student, the parents and the local school to provide the best education the state can. Additionally, all State Operated School staff members are state employees. The school schedule and the summer school schedule are created with the requirements for state employees in mind.

**What is the per pupil cost at Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled (MSSD)?**

The most current data is for FY14, and the expenditure per pupil for that FY was \$37,736.

**What is the projected need for building in the near future for MSSD? Increase, decrease, same?**

Generally, building needs are projected to remain the same. However, there are several buildings that need to be expanded to accommodate increased enrollment at those locations.

**What is the average pay for MSSD?**

Teachers: Average Salary: \$32,307 with a range of \$27,504 through \$48,840

Administrators: Average Salary: \$42,887 with a range of \$32,544 through \$54,600

Assistants: Average Salary: \$14,835 with a range of \$12,888 through \$18,456

**How does that pay compare to their counterparts in traditional schools?**

The average elementary and secondary school teacher salary in Missouri is \$47,391 compared to MSSD's \$32,307

The average elementary and secondary school administrator salary in Missouri is \$83,899 compared to MSSD's \$42,887

The average assistants/aide salary in Missouri is \$18,453 compared to MSSD's \$14,835

*\*Note: Starting salaries have not increased since FY09. General salary increases have been given only to current employees.*

**Is the high cost per pupil because the number of pupils is smaller or because their needs are greater?**

There is a high cost per pupil because the students' needs are greater due to cognitive disabilities as well as severe health problems. Additionally, there are behavioral issues for a number of students which require additional personal attention. *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a student's Individualized Education Program, or both determine what resources are needed to support each student.*

**Why are the salaries for MSSC employees so much lower on average than district employees? Is it because they are state employees and not local?**

The salaries are much lower on average for MSSD employees because they are state employees. The gap between state employees and local districts continues to widen each year.

**Are you able to get and keep qualified people for those rates?**

The state does have trouble attracting and keeping qualified employees. This is a problem across the state, but particularly difficult in the urban areas.

**Is the number of requested FTEs higher than the actual number because of high turnover, or are there more FTEs on the books than are needed for MSSD schools?**

The number of requested FTEs is higher than the actual number mainly due to turnover; however, the use of long-term substitute teachers is a factor too. Long-term substitutes (not eligible for any benefits) are used when the state is unable to hire a qualified teacher. Substitutes (long-term or short-term) are not counted against the FTE. If the long-term substitute positions are suddenly filled, it would use up a significant portion of the FTE pool.

## **Special Education/Early Childhood Education**

### ***Do all First Steps Providers have to be licensed?***

*If a discipline requires licensure, individuals who want to work in First Steps must provide a copy of the license in order to enroll with our contractor (central finance office or CFO). The CFO contractor also manages the provider accounts, which includes a regular review of all accounts to ensure the requirements are maintained. One part of the review is a quarterly licensure check for disciplines that require a license to practice. If the provider cannot produce an updated license from professional registration, the account is closed to ensure providers are not practicing without a valid license.*

## **Proficiency-based Grading**

### ***Which high schools in the state are doing proficiency-based grading?***

*The Department does not collect data that allows us to identify high schools using this method. The Department is aware of some high schools using this method for particular courses, such as personal finance.*

## **School Attendance**

### ***What statute governs kindergarten/first grade entry?***

*Section 160.053, RSMo, states that*

- *A child is eligible for admission to kindergarten if the child reaches the age of five (5) before the first day of August of the school year beginning in that calendar year.*
- *A child is eligible for admission to kindergarten/first grade if the child is a military dependent and has successfully completed an accredited pre-kindergarten program or has attended an accredited kindergarten program in another state.*
- *A child who reaches the age of five (5) prior to the cut-off date is eligible for admission to the summer school session immediately preceding kindergarten.*
- *A child is eligible for admission to first grade if the child reaches the age of six (6) before the first day of August of the school year beginning in that calendar year.*
- *“Any child who completes the kindergarten year shall not be required to meet the age requirements of a district for entrance into grade one.” This law does not specify the type of kindergarten program that must be completed prior to promotion to the first grade. Most school districts accept successful completion of kindergarten at any accredited public, private or parochial school as sufficient basis for promotion to the first grade. A child transferring from an unaccredited school, such as a home school, may be subject to additional evaluation to determine promotion.*

### ***Exceptions***

- *Pursuant to statutes §160.054 and §160.055, RSMo, the St. Louis and Kansas City School Districts may establish a later kindergarten/first grade entry date.*
- *A school may enroll a transfer student that has attended kindergarten or first grade in another state with a different entry age date on the theory of giving "full faith and credit" to the other states' entry age law.*
- *Parents seeking information regarding the above-referenced exceptions to kindergarten/first grade enrollment should contact the school district in which they intend to enroll their child.*

### ***Which year is Average Daily Attendance based on?***

*Average Daily Attendance is based on the previous year's enrollment. For example, ADA for the 2015-2016 school year will be calculated based on the 2014-2015 enrollment numbers.*

