

Department Cancels Required Statewide Assessments Due to COVID-19: Impact on Local Education Agencies and 2020 Graduating Seniors

As school closures continued due to COVID-19, on March 19, 2020, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and Commissioner of Education Margie Vandeven announced, “There is a time and a place for statewide required assessments and now is not the time. Effective immediately, Missouri will be cancelling statewide required assessments for this school year.” DESE subsequently applied for the United States Department of Education waiver of required assessments, including the Missouri Assessment Program’s (MAP) End-of-Course (EOC), Grade-Level and Alternate (MAP-A) assessments. DESE received final approval of this waiver on March 30, 2020.

DESE officials have examined the impact of cancelling spring 2020 testing and developed the following action plans and guidance related to that decision.

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School Accountability

Federal Identification

The federal waiver of testing included a provision suspending requirements for the identification of schools for Comprehensive and Targeted Support and Improvement. Because Missouri is not scheduled to identify schools based on 2020 data, no change is needed.

MAP-A

Although students were administered portions of the MAP-A test in the fall and spring instructionally embedded windows, testing was not completed. Therefore, no MAP-A scores will be available.

The cap of 1% on MAP-A participation was not part of the waiver already approved. Missouri will submit a waiver for this requirement.

Annual Performance Report (APR)

The requirements for most of the annual testing are federal and are used for school identification. The results of the assessments are also used for the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) APR. Because no assessment data will be available and because data used in the College and Career Readiness standard are significantly lacking, no APR will be produced for 2020.

Plans are under way to develop the 2021 MSIP 5 APR as well as the first MSIP 6 APR, with consideration for the absence of 2020 assessment data.

Accreditation

Decisions on changes of classification based on improvements in APR scores during the 2020-21 school year will be delayed until the next APR is produced.

Decisions on changes of classification based on superintendent certification and non-APR aspects of MSIP 5 (financial stress, statutory compliance, etc.) will be made as usual.

Charter Renewals

Charter schools seeking renewal will be held accountable for: available APR scores prior to 2020, compliance with their performance contracts, fiscal and organizational viability, and governance standards.

Graduate Level-Not-Determined (LND)

DESE has suspended MSIP Graduate LND requirements for students who are high school seniors in school year 2019-20. Seniors graduating without all required EOCs, including Missouri Option and School Flex Program graduates, will not generate a Graduate LND for their district or charter.

Missouri Option

The Graduate LND exemption applies to Missouri Option students. Districts and charters will not be assigned a Graduate LND if a Missouri Option student graduates in spring 2020 without taking all required EOCs.

School Flex Program

The Graduate LND exemption applies to School Flex Program students. Districts and charters will not be assigned a Graduate LND if a School Flex Program student graduates in spring 2020 without taking all required EOCs.

Assessments**Students Enrolled in EOC Classes in 2019-20**

If a student was enrolled in a class with a required EOC for the 2019-20 school year, that student will be assigned a special exemption code that will follow them throughout their high school career. The code will stand in place of an EOC score for that class. Those students will not be required to take the EOC for the classes they were enrolled in during 2019-20.

Eighth Grade Algebra I Students

This response is pending guidance from the United States Department of Education.

American Government and American History EOC Performance Level Setting

The new American Government and American History assessments were field tested in 2019. The results of the 2019-20 administration, the first operational year of the assessment, were to be analyzed and undergo level setting during the summer of 2020. Because too few tests were administered in the fall of 2019, level setting will be delayed until sufficient data from future administrations are available.

Data Availability and Reporting**Report Card**

The waiver for state testing included a waiver of reporting assessment outcomes on the state report card. The state report card using 2020 data, to be published in December 2020, will not include the waived elements.

English Proficiency Assessment (ACCESS)

The ACCESS test window closed in February and testing is complete. Individual Student Reports will be provided to districts.

Finance

Performance Districts and State Adequacy Target (SAT)

DESE is engaged in internal discussions regarding the fall 2021 recalculation of the SAT.

Instructional Decisions

Third Grade Reading

On April 2, 2020, Governor Parson approved DESE's request to waive the Reading Assessments Statute ([Section 167.645.2, RSMo](#)). These Grade 3 reading assessments, selected at the local level, are not part of the federal assessment waiver DESE applied for and received from the U.S. Department of Education. As is evident by the department's focus on early learning and early literacy, DESE believes in the importance of these assessments; however, school closures make fulfilling this requirement unrealistic.

Missouri Course Access and Virtual School Program (MOCAP) Enrollment

During this period of school closure, students may seek enrollment in MOCAP courses or full-time virtual instruction. When making decisions about how to respond to these requests, schools should consider local enrollment policy and whether or not the school is offering a full schedule of instruction. If the enrollment policy limits course enrollments *for all courses* to specific enrollment periods and if the school is providing a full set of offerings, a change of enrollment may not be advised. If, however, the school is only offering a limited curriculum and the student is requesting enrollment in a way that provides a full education, that request would be in the student's best educational interest.

Graduation Requirements

Units of Credit

The minimum number of credits required for graduation remain at 24. However, the same regulation provides districts with flexibility in how those credits are earned.

State Regulation 5 CSR 20-100.190, quoted below, outlines the requirements for graduation.

“(1) High School Graduation Requirements.

Twenty-four (24) units of credit are required for graduation.

The requirements are stated in terms of the number of units of credit that must be earned in each subject area:

Subject Area	Units of Credit
Communication Arts	4.0
Social Studies	3.0
Mathematics	3.0
Science	3.0
Fine Art	1.0
Practical Arts	1.0
Physical Education	1.0
Health Education	.5
Personal Finance	.5
Electives	7.0
Total Credits	24.0

(2) The minimum high school graduation requirements should focus on competencies and align with the Missouri Learning Standards. The Missouri Learning Standards are located on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website.

...
 5) Variances and Substitutions. The state minimum graduation requirements cannot be applied with absolute uniformity in every case. Students' individual situations sometimes require consideration of variances and alternatives. If a local board chooses to allow these variances and alternatives, it must do so through officially adopted policies and procedures that will ensure fair and consistent application of its policies."

Frequently Asked Questions – 2020 Graduating Seniors

1. Some students on track to graduate this spring have credit deficits that may have been resolved by the end of spring semester. What options are available for granting credit to these students?

- Schools have broad flexibility to grant credit. If a senior can demonstrate competency in the material through examination, projects, etc., schools can grant credit.
- Schools are advised to examine and amend their local policies if needed. These policies should be applied uniformly. Please contact your policy advisors for additional information.
- Schools should review information found in the [Graduation Handbook](#) related to proficiency-based credit, waivers and substitutions of academic programs for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study, and substitution of courses to fulfill academic credit requirements with CTE courses.

Additional resources:

- As schools transition to remote instruction, they may want to consider the following options for grading practices.
 - Hold Harmless: Grades from the end of the 3rd quarter could go up, but not down. New learning could be used for feedback but won't impact the grade.
 - Hold Harmless plus competencies: Grades from the end of the 3rd quarter could go up, but not down. Minimum expectations (meeting certain competencies, power standards, etc.) would have to be met to implement hold harmless.
 - Competency-Based or Standards-Based Approach: Implement a grade-less or modified approach for the 4th quarter. Implement a learning contract to individualize learning for students.
 - Pass/Fail: Student work would still be accepted and graded, but 4th quarter grades or semester grades would be pass/fail.
 - Hybrid: Students/families elect to keep the current grade and work to improve it (Hold Harmless) or receive credit/no credit (Pass/Fail).

2. A few seniors scheduled to graduate this spring still need to complete the requirement for instruction in Personal Finance or assessment of Personal Finance if taken as an embedded credit. What options are available?

- On April 2, 2020, Governor Parson approved DESE’s request to waive this statute, removing this requirement for 2020 Graduating Seniors.

Additional Resources:

- Because student financial literacy is important, some schools may wish to provide additional options for this learning.
 - Several MOCAP vendors offer Personal Finance courses.
 - Schools can develop self-paced instructional material.
 - The National Endowment for Financial Education has a free online Personal Finance course for teens. DESE has not evaluated this course.

3. A few seniors scheduled to graduate this spring still need to complete 30 minutes of instruction in Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Instruction and Heimlich maneuver training as a requirement for graduation (§ 170.310, RSMo). What options are available?

- On April 2, 2020, Governor Parson approved DESE’s request to waive this statute, removing this requirement for 2020 Graduating Seniors.

Additional Resources:

- Like financial literacy, life-saving techniques are important skills. Even with the waiver, some schools may wish to provide additional options for this learning.
 - Schools may select videos available on YouTube or other platforms, such as:
 - The ADAM Project, CPR and AED: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzZGpmsXR2E>
 - Cincinnati Children’s, CPR for Children 1-12: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7Q1s7ppSwc>
 - Mayo Clinic, Heimlich Maneuver for Adults and Infants: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVnGWqqe-6M>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUS4TVzwl9g>
 - Schools may enroll students in a virtual class through the American Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/online-safety-classes>.
 - DESE has not evaluated these courses for content, accessibility or quality.

4. The majority of students fulfill Missouri and United States Constitution requirements, along with the Citizenship Test, early in their high school career. However, there may be a few graduating seniors that still need to take Missouri and US Constitution (§ 170.011, RSMo.) or Citizenship Tests (§ 170.345, RSMo) to meet the requirements for graduation.

- On April 2, 2020, Governor Parson approved DESE’s request to waive this statute, removing this requirement for 2020 Graduating Seniors.

Additional Resources:

- Becoming a strong and successful citizen is one of the core purposes for public education. Because of this, schools may wish to pursue additional learning opportunities in these areas, even though the requirement is waived.
 - ICivics: Teach Curriculum units tied to civics and American history available for free at: <https://www.icivics.org/teachers>. Suitable for middle school and high school. With teacher-made modifications, also suitable for grades 3, 4 and 5.

- ICivics: Games
High-quality, high-interest online games tied to many civics topics, 15-30 minutes each, available for free at: <https://www.icivics.org/games>. Suitable for grades 3-5 with adult support and upper grades for individual student work.
- C-SPAN Classroom
Adaptable lesson plan ideas and support materials useful in civics and history classrooms available for free at: <https://www.c-span.org/classroom/>. Suitable for grades 3-12.

5. Many secondary students in CTE programs count on having the opportunity to earn a viable credential while still in high school. Industry Recognized Credentials (IRCs) and Technical Skills Assessments (TSAs) are not required assessments, but it is beneficial for students to earn these credentials to assist them in entering the workforce following graduation. What options are available for schools?

- If students have had the requisite training needed to pass the assessment, schools have the flexibility of administering IRCs or TSAs to any eligible student.
- For 2020 graduates, schools may administer IRCs or TSAs through August 31, 2020 (the due date for Perkins V Core Indicators of Performance).
- For students who are not graduating in 2020, schools can administer the IRC or TSA at any time prior to the students' graduation date and report the data on the June core data cycle of that school year.
- Schools must follow testing protocols established by each vendor to assure students earn the credential.
- The June 2019-20 core data reporting cycle will remain open through August 31, 2020 for schools to report information for both 2020 graduates and undergraduates who have earned the IRCs or TSAs prior to that date.
- Schools may use FY20 state and federal CTE funds for IRCs or TSAs administered during FY20; they are permitted to use FY21 state and federal CTE funds for this purpose if administering an IRC or TSA between July 1 and August 31, 2020.

6. Some students enrolled in the Missouri Option Program may have lost their employment or been laid off due to COVID-19. Have these student lost eligibility for the program?

- DESE is suspending this requirement for 2020 Graduating Seniors. A student who was laid off or lost employment due to COVID-19 is still eligible as a Missouri Option student.

7. Some students enrolled in the School Flex Program may have lost their employment or been laid off due to COVID-19. Have these student lost eligibility for the program?

- DESE is suspending this requirement for 2020 Graduating Seniors. A student who was laid off or lost employment due to COVID-19 is still eligible as a School Flex Program student.

8. With limited HiSET testing availability, what will happen if students do not take the test before June 30?

- DESE has extended the deadline to test until August 31. Students who should have tested by June 30 but successfully complete the test by August 31 will be credited to the prior year for graduation and dropout calculations. While no APR will be calculated based on the current year data, the graduation rate calculations will provide a basis for trend data in future APRs.

9. Without the English II EOC and the ACT, can a student earn a Seal of Biliteracy this year?

- DESE has temporarily revised the Seal of Biliteracy English and Language Other Than English (LOTE) requirements for seniors meeting high school graduation requirements in spring 2020. See below for the revised requirements.

2020 Temporary Revisions		
Criteria	Seal of Biliteracy	Distinguished Seal of Biliteracy
English – Only 1 Required		
English II GPA	3.0	3.5
ACCESS	4.0	4.7
LOTE		
Test-at-home options available through STAMP, AAPPL, ILT, or ALIRA	Same criteria required before 2020	Same criteria required before 2020

- Districts may continue to use current portfolio criteria for languages not supported by testing assessed using ACTFL or WIDA performance descriptors. Districts are responsible for finding competent assessors for the portfolios. This may be accomplished virtually.
- In the event that a district is unable to implement the Seal of Biliteracy award this year under the revised criteria, the district may extend the testing window for class of 2020 for one year beyond graduation.

For further information, please contact the following DESE team members:

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