

# Accountability system in flux

Student achievement data have taken on increasing importance as policymakers use standardized reading and math tests to judge the effectiveness of schools, teachers and principals and to determine rewards and sanctions.

Congress has renewed the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act by replacing No Child Left Behind with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

*These are some accountability requirements you should know about:*

- Current federal law requires all students to be tested yearly in reading and mathematics in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school.
- Current federal law requires all students—as well as subgroups of English language learners, special education students, disadvantaged students and members of major racial and ethnic groups—to meet reading and math achievement targets set by the state.
- Minnesota’s accountability system is based primarily on student performance on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) in math and reading.
- Minnesota also requires high school students to pass state graduation tests, but this system is changing. The 2013 Legislature voted to replace the Graduation-Required Assessments for Diploma (GRAD) in writing, reading and math with different assessments related to college and career readiness.
- Minnesota participates partially in the national Common Core State Standards initiative, adopting the English-language arts standards but keeping its more rigorous math standards. Minnesota uses its own tests to assess the standards.

\*Some of these provisions may change as ESSA is debated at the state level. ESSA will be fully implemented during the 2017-18 school year. Please watch the Minnesota Department of Education’s website for more information or to get involved in the implementation process. Also, please contact Education Minnesota with any questions about testing or the ESSA.

