

# Why Participation Matters

The Maine Education Assessments (MEA)



## Why does Maine have standardized state assessments?

Federal requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) require all states, including Maine, to administer a statewide assessment in mathematics, reading and science. Students must be provided with the equitable opportunity to show what they know and can do in relation to grade level content (state academic standards). This is one of many requirements that enable Maine to accept more than \$70 million in federal funding for Maine schools.



## How are scores used?

The state-level assessments are only one academic measurement of how students are performing. The data are used as part of the state accountability plan to identify schools which are in need of targeted additional support and resources. There are many other forms of evaluation that help educators and schools determine how students are doing in school, academically, socially, and emotionally. MEAs can be useful as one data point in a much larger picture of student achievement and school success.



## What is required?

Students in grades 3-8 and one year of high school are required to participate in an annual state assessment of [reading and mathematics](#). Students in grades 5, 8 and one year of high school are required to participate in a state assessment of [science](#). Additionally, students identified as multilingual learners are required to participate in an annual assessment of [English language proficiency](#). ESSA requires that at least 95% of eligible students across content areas and student populations participate.



## What if Maine does not reach 95% participation?

Maine could potentially receive less federal funds for Maine schools that are experiencing significant challenges. Participation rates lower than 95% can also skew performance data for the school.



## Where does the data come from?

Participation rate data comes from the annual spring assessment results and Maine DOE student enrollment/assessment rosters. The Maine DOE utilizes school administrative unit (SAU) reported enrollment data and aligns it with participation requirements for each of the applicable grades.



## What about students with disabilities?

The majority of students eligible for special education participate in the general assessments in reading, math and science. Students can participate in general assessments with accommodations as identified in the individualized education plan (IEP). Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may be eligible to participate in alternate assessments. The determination of eligibility to participate in alternate assessments based on [alternate academic achievement standards \(AA-AAAS\)](#) is an IEP Team decision, utilizing state eligibility guidance. Federal requirements do not allow greater than 1% of the total students assessed to participate in an alternate assessment. This could also result in an impact on federal funds. Should a state exceed the 1% cap, a waiver can be requested from U.S. DOE. A pre-requisite of applying for the waiver is 95% participation in the MEAs

**Additional questions around assessment participation and the Maine Educational Assessments?**

Reach out to a member of the [Maine DOE Assessment Team](#).