

Mississippi Curriculum Content Assessment System

The primary purposes of the *Mississippi Curriculum Content Assessment System* are to provide information needed for state-level decisions about the effectiveness of instructional programs in local school districts and to provide districts with information to be used in improving instruction. The primary goals of the *Mississippi Curriculum Content Assessment System* are to promote instructional improvement in classrooms throughout the state and to provide valid, reliable data for accountability purposes in compliance with MS Code 37-16-1 and SB 2156. Since 1998 Mississippi has extensively revised the assessment system used for K-12 students. The revised *Mississippi Curriculum Content Assessment System* better fits the needs of students, parents, and schools and serves as the basis of the state's new accountability system.

The objectives of this program include: assistance in the identification of educational and instructional needs at the individual, small group, school, district and state levels; assessing how well districts and schools are meeting state goals and academic growth standards; providing information to aid in the development of policy issues and concerns; providing a basis for comparisons among schools, districts and between districts, the state, and the nation, where appropriate; and producing data which can be used to aid in the identification of exceptional educational programs or processes. Training on the *Mississippi Curriculum Content Assessment System* is provided by the Office of Student Assessment for district and school-level personnel. Training is provided on testing policies and procedures, interpretation of test scores, and the improvement of instruction through the analysis of test data.

Mississippi Curriculum Test

The Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT) is aligned with the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks. Mississippi teachers reviewed all test items and established the proficiency level standards. The test measures student performance in reading, language, and mathematics at grades 2 through 8.

Norm-Referenced Test

The norm-referenced test (NRT) consists of survey battery tests in mathematics, reading, and language arts. The NRT is the CTBS/5, which is part of the *TerraNova* assessment series. Student performance on the NRT can be compared to a 1996 national norm group. The NRT is timed and administered under standard conditions and contains approximately 140 multiple-choice items. In 2000 and 2001, the norm-referenced test was administered to students in grades 3-8. During the 2001-2002 school year, students in grades 5 and 8 were tested. There are no plans for this test to be included in the accountability system.

Grades 4 and 7 Writing Assessments

These custom-developed assessments are aligned with the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks. Mississippi teachers developed the writing prompts and designed the scoring rubrics. Each student responds to two writing prompts: narrative, informative, or persuasive.

Subject Area Testing Program (SATP)

This testing program consists of end-of-course, criterion-referenced tests in Algebra I, Biology I, U.S. History from 1877, and English II with a writing component. The SATP provides a meaningful assessment of secondary academic content tied to the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks and promotes instructional strategies integrating both content and problem solving. It also offers a meaningful tool for accountability of local schools and districts. The SATP is currently being phased in to ultimately replace the FLE as a requirement for graduation. In July 2001, Mississippi teachers from each content area went through the standard setting process. A scale score of 300 was established as the minimum passing score. In August 2001, the Mississippi Board of Education approved the results of the SATP standard setting.

Functional Literacy Examination (FLE)

The FLE is the minimum competency test currently required by some students for receiving a Mississippi high school diploma. It is initially given in the 11th grade with repeat testing in the 11th and 12th grades for those not passing. The test includes multiple-choice questions in reading, mathematics and written communications along with a direct writing prompt. The FLE was initially developed and implemented in the mid 1980s. As successive groups of students are required to pass the SATP tests to receive a high school diploma, the FLE will be phased out.