

Mississippi Statewide Assessment System

The primary purposes of the *Mississippi Statewide 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 Statewide 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, SB 2156 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Since 1998, the state assessment system used for K-12 students has undergone extensive revision. The revised *Mississippi Statewide 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 Statewide 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) measures student performance in reading, language, and mathematics in grades 2 through 8. The MCT is aligned with the state's content standards. Mississippi teachers reviewed all test items and established the proficiency level standards. In July 2001, the Mississippi Board of Education approved the State Board Policy *Implementation of Grades 3 and 7 Benchmarks for the Mississippi Curriculum Test*. This policy establishes grades 3 and 7 as benchmark grades and outlines the procedure for students who do not meet the benchmark scores on the MCT in these two grades. In September 2001, a committee comprised of Mississippi teachers established the benchmark scores for the MCT, which were approved by the Mississippi Board of Education. School-level accreditation levels were set using MCT data from spring 2003. The MCT is also used for measuring academic achievement, for holding schools accountable for the academic growth of students, and for the computation of Adequate Yearly Progress. CTB/McGraw-Hill is the contractor for the MCT.

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 published by CTB/McGraw-Hill. Student performance on the NRT can be compared to a 1996 national norm

group. In spring 2003, the norm-referenced test was administered to students in grade 6. There are no plans for this test to be included in the accreditation model. CTB/McGraw-Hill is the contractor for the NRT.

Grades 4 and 7 Writing Assessments

These custom-developed assessments are aligned with the state's content standards. Mississippi teachers reviewed the writing prompts and designed the scoring rubrics. Each student responds to one writing prompt in the narrative, informative, or persuasive mode. CTB/McGraw-Hill is the contractor for the Grades 4 and 7 Writing Assessments.

Subject Area Testing Program (SATP)

The Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) consists of end-of-course, criterion-referenced tests in Algebra I, Biology I, U.S. History from 1877, and English II. The tests for Algebra I, Biology I, and U.S. History contain multiple-choice items and an open-ended item. The test for English II consists of two components: a multiple-choice test and a writing assessment. The SATP provides a meaningful assessment of secondary academic content tied to the state's content standards and promotes instructional strategies integrating both content and problem solving. It also offers a meaningful tool for accountability of local schools and districts. All SATP tests count for graduation; however, the tests required for graduation are determined by the year the student entered the ninth grade. In July 2001, Mississippi teachers from each content area participated in the standard setting process to determine the number of raw score points a student must earn to pass each test. Later a scale score of 300 was established as the minimum passing score for all four tests. In August 2001, the Mississippi Board of Education approved the results of the standard setting. Harcourt Educational Measurement is the contractor for the SATP.

Functional Literacy Examination (FLE)

The Functional Literacy Examination (FLE) is the minimum competency test currently required to receive 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. With the implementation of the Subject Area Testing Program, students will be required to pass the Subject Area Tests to receive a high school diploma, and the FLE will be phased out. For most students, mathematics is now the only section of the FLE required for graduation. NCS Pearson, Inc. is the contractor for the FLE.