
Issue Date: May 30, 2023

Act 28 Literacy Council VT Comprehensive Assessment Program Data Presentation – February 21, 2024

Purpose

This document was developed by the Agency of Education (AOE) to support the Advisory Council on Literacy (Council) in performing their duties as defined in Act 28 of 2021. What follows are a list of questions from the Council sent to the AOE following the [Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program data presentation](#) provided on February 21, 2024. The questions are -- and their responses -- grouped for organizational purposes. Groupings are not exact and there may be some overlap and/or repetition.

About the Vermont Comprehensive Assessments

When does VTCAP assessment begin and end?

The VT Comprehensive Assessment Program (VTCAP) begins on March 11 and is open through April 26 of this year (2024). There is a one-week make-up window that runs from April 29 through May 3, 2024, for any students who may have missed or had testing interrupted.

What are examples of tasks in the listening, reading, and comprehension components of the VTCAP?

Examples of all tasks can be found on the practice tests on the [Practice Test – Vermont Support Site \(cognia.org\)](#). More information about the Operational Test Blueprint can be found at [VTCAP TestSpecifications 23-24.pdf \(cognia.org\)](#). Each of the assessed content areas – English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics and Science – have an operational test blueprint that describes the target distribution of content that will count towards student scores.

How are the written components of the assessments scored?

The writing component of the ELA assessment is scored by humans. Scorers rate students' essays on two, 4-point scales – *Written Expression* and *Conventions*. All scorers must meet accuracy thresholds on training items before scoring operational (actual) items. Read-behind, double-blind scoring, and recalibration methods are all used during operational scoring.

Note on terminology: Read-behinds are scored sets of essays that are read again as a check of Scorer accuracy and consistency. In “double-blind scoring, neither scorer knows whether the response has been scored before, or what score has been given if it has been scored.



What kinds of accommodations are available in a computer adaptive test?

Details on universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations can be found in the [VTCAP Accessibility and Accommodations Guide](#).

Is Cognia considered a more robust test overall compared to the previous test?

Cognia is the assessment vendor selected by the AOE through a competitive bid process to develop and implement the new state summative assessment program in 2023. For more information on why Cognia was selected as the new assessment vendor please see the [press release published in 2022](#).

About the Spring 2023 Results

Where can someone find statewide result information?

Statewide results can be found in the [FACT SHEET: Vermont Agency of Education Releases 2023 Statewide Assessment Results](#). District and school results can be found in the [Vermont Education Dashboard: Assessment](#) (VED) on the AOE Data and Reporting webpages.

What is the achievement for Reading, Writing and Listening? What are the areas of strength and weakness within Reading, Writing and Listening?

Statewide results are not reported by sub-scores. However, each local school and local school district has access to student sub-scores.

Do we have any sense of which districts are doing better than others; do some districts stand out for high achievement?

District and school results can be found on the VED Assessment dashboard linked above.

Are the data suggesting any hopeful trends? Are you able to tell us what percentage increase you are seeing in ELA proficiency since 2022?

Because 2023 was the first administration of the Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program it is difficult to analyze trends over time. The VTCAP assessments and the Smarter Balanced assessments are designed to measure the same content standards but are ultimately different tests and results should be compared with caution.

The proficiency rates in 2022 and 2023 are not directly comparable. The linking study (see next question) only linked scaled scores. Proficiency cut scores were determined independently for each assessment using different items, different data, and a different panel of educators.

What is a “linking study?” What did the linking study do? What does it tell us about the two assessment programs, Smarter Balance and VTCAP?

A linking study was conducted that statistically linked scaled scores from the Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program assessments in ELA, math, and science to Smarter Balanced assessments in ELA and math and the Vermont Science Assessment in science. A randomly equivalent groups design was used to link percentiles, known as equipercentile linking, using data from 2022 and 2023 administration. This allows for a moderate translation of the different scales used in both assessments to identify scores in both assessments that have the same percentile rank. The linking study and equipercentile linking gives some, but limited, insight into the comparability of very different assessment instruments. Test items were not compared and proficiency levels were not linked.

Vermont Assessment Policy

Are there statewide assessments for grades K-2? If not, why not?

There are no statewide assessments in ELA, math, or science in grades K-2. ELA and math are assessed in grades 3-9 and science is assessed in grades 5, 8, and 11. The statewide English language proficiency (WIDA-ACCESS) assessments are administered to all English learners in grades K-12.

To reduce the amount of time Vermont students spend taking assessments, the statewide assessments are only administered in the federally required grade levels noted above.

All Vermont public school districts are required to have a Local Comprehensive Assessment System, which includes K-2 assessments tailored to local needs that are developmentally appropriate. More information about Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems can be found on the AOE's [State and Local Assessments webpage](#).

Data Questions

Is there a definition of "historically privileged" group?

Under [Vermont's Consolidated State ESSA Plan](#), students from historically marginalized backgrounds, also referred to as HMG, include students eligible for free or reduced priced lunch, English learners, students in foster care, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, students with military-connected families, students on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and students who are a racial or ethnic minority in Vermont. Vermont combines these student groups into one group to balance public reporting of assessment results with protecting individual students' privacy.

All other students are coded as not from a historically marginalized background.

The AOE does not use the term “historically privileged” as there are students not currently included in the historically marginalized group that also belong to protected classes. To use the term “historically privileged” when referring to students who belong to those groups would be misleading. Furthermore, membership in any group does not represent the experience of any individual student and should not be assumed.

What is meant by “evidence-based” when we talk about curriculum, instruction and assessment? Why is it important?

The term “evidence-based” as defined in a [Regional Educational Laboratories Southeast infographic](#) on the Institute of Education Sciences website,

when used with respect to a State, local educational agency, or school activity, means an activity, strategy, or intervention that:

- (i) demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on (I) strong evidence from at least 1 well designed and well implemented experimental study; (II) moderate evidence from at least 1 well designed and well implemented quasi-experimental study; or (III) promising evidence from at least 1 well designed and well implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or*
- (ii) (I) demonstrates a rationale based on high quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and (II) includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.*