

NSCAS General Summative Assessment for Grades 3–8

Nebraska's Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS), pronounced "en-skass," is a statewide assessment system that supports Nebraska's holistic view of students. It includes formative, interim, and summative measures that together provide valuable information to educators and parents as they prepare students for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life.

The NSCAS General Summative, administered annually in the spring, is the component of NSCAS that assesses student learning relative to grade-level expectations. It is criterion-referenced, which means it measures student performance against a fixed set of criteria—Nebraska's content area standards for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics (grades 3–8) and for science (grades 5 and 8).

Spring 2021

In spring 2021, grade-level performance data for ELA and mathematics will be generated by the NSCAS Phase I Pilot assessment. This test will be administered in lieu of the NSCAS General Summative. In recognition of coronavirus impacts, the assessment will be shorter. It will also assist with the transition to through-year adaptive assessment.

The NSCAS Phase I Pilot is a transitional test, so it is different from both the NSCAS Summative and the adaptive through-year assessment that the state is moving toward. It represents the state's effort to minimize impacts on instructional time, given the unique circumstances of this year, while also taking a step forward in the evolution of NSCAS.

In addition, instead of the NSCAS General Summative for science, a census field test for Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for Science will be administered. The field test will inform Nebraska's transition to the operational test that will be administered for science in spring 2022.

Computer Adaptive Test

Like the NSCAS General Summative, the NSCAS Phase I Pilot is a Computer Adaptive Test (CAT). It is taken on a computer or tablet, such as a Chromebook® or iPad®. This allows for more interactive questions and enables the test to adapt in response to each student's performance.

If a student answers a question correctly, the next question will be more difficult. If a student answers a question incorrectly, the next question will be easier. This creates an efficient, personalized experience and provides students the best opportunity to show what they know. Because the next question is based on how the student answered previously, the student cannot go back to an already-answered question. In addition, a student cannot proceed to the next question until the current question is answered. While the test adapts to each student's performance, the questions it presents are aligned to the student's grade level. For students with significant cognitive disabilities, an alternate assessment—the NSCAS Alternate Summative—is available.

NSCAS GENERAL SUMMATIVE CONTENT AREA STANDARDS

ELA and Mathematics (Grades 3–8)

Based on Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards

Science (Grades 5 & 8)

Based on Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards starting in 2020

2021 NSCAS GENERAL SUMMATIVE DATES

March 22–April 30, 2021

May 3–May 7, 2021: Make-up week

RECOMMENDED TEST TIME

ELA

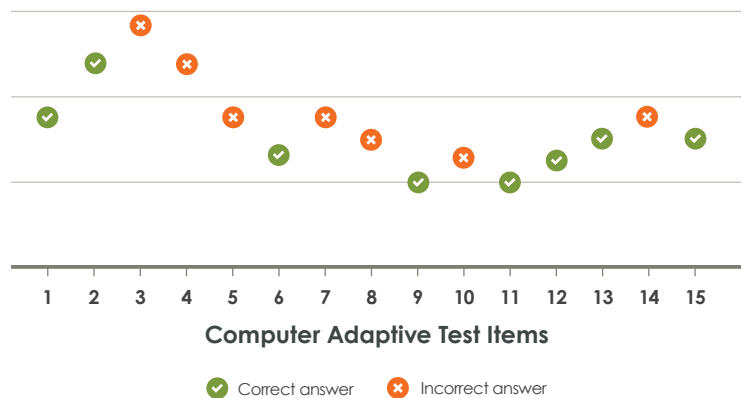
35 questions, 60 minutes

Mathematics

35 questions, 60 minutes

Science field test

20 questions (grade 5); 17 questions (grade 8), 60 minutes



Scores and Achievement Levels

The NSCAS Phase I Pilot that will be administered in spring 2021 is a transitional test that will use on-grade (NSCAS Summative) items. It will produce NSCAS scale scores and NSCAS achievement levels. In addition, it will also produce a linked RIT scale score. The scale score is a representation of the total number of questions answered correctly and has been converted into a standard scale. Each content area is scaled separately, so the scale scores for one content area cannot be compared to another content area.

The achievement level is a description of the student's overall performance and is used to help make the scale scores meaningful. Scale score ranges, or cut scores, define different achievement levels for each grade and content area.

Results

The process for reporting and use of results will be different in 2021 than in a typical school year due to the unique teaching and learning contexts of the 2020–21 school year and the transitional nature of the NSCAS tests administered in spring 2021.

The NSCAS Phase I Pilot results for ELA and mathematics will be provided to appropriate data to district, school, and state personnel. In addition, Individual Student Reports (ISRs) for ELA and mathematics will be available for schools and districts. However, results will not be used for accountability classifications or designations. Classifications from the 2018–19 school year will remain in place. Given that science is a field test, no science results will be reported to districts or the public.

Data will be used by the Nebraska Department of Education to support research required to transition to through-year assessment. Districts will also receive a file containing data for individual students. Given the transitional nature of the tests, results will not be comparable to preceding years and should be interpreted with caution and in context of other data sources. Districts should continue to rely on existing assessments such as MAP Growth to inform teaching and learning.

