

# Vermont Statewide Summative Assessment (ELA, MATH, SCIENCE) FAQ

## Audience: District and school personnel

### Participation

**Q: Who is required to participate in testing this year?**

A: All Vermont students who are publicly funded and/or are enrolled in a public school are required to [participate](#) in statewide summative assessment (as in any other year).

**Q: How will statewide summative assessment be delivered?**

A: All statewide testing will be administered in person, i.e., no remote options are available.

**Q: What if a fully remote student does not show up for testing (even though we communicated with the family and provided them with an opportunity to participate)?**

A: If a student does not participate in testing, though all valid and appropriate attempts to provide an assessment opportunity to the student, non-participation should be documented in TIDE (See the [TIDE User Guide](#), page 85). Two codes have been developed specifically for use this year with fully remote students who do not participate in testing due to medical fragility (“fragile” non-participation code) or do not appear for in-person testing (“fully remote” non-participation code). Medical fragility is defined as being unable to engage in in-person encounters outside of the home because of one or more pre-existing conditions. All students must be presented with an opportunity to test. Please note that non-participation codes are not approved exemptions but will allow the state to organize and better understand non-participation in 2020-21.

**Q: Has there been any change to the medical exemption policy?**

A: [Medical exemptions](#) are available with no changes from previous years.

**Q: How should schools communicate with families about testing?**

A: All schools should communicate with students and families about the testing opportunities being provided for students. A sample caregiver template letter can be [found here](#). Schools should be communicating with families of enrolled students who [are learning remotely](#) to provide testing schedules and other important information.

### Reporting/results use

**Q: I heard that scores are going to be delayed this year. When will get results?**

## Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information please contact:  
Amanda Gorham, at [Amanda.Gorham@vermont.gov](mailto:Amanda.Gorham@vermont.gov)

A: This year student results on statewide assessments will be available just like every year, about 10 days after a student completes their assessment, the results will be available online using the Reporting System. There may be a delay in state level reporting as our testing vendor is completing additional analyses in light of the uniqueness of this past year.

**Q: The US Department of Education offered extra flexibilities for administering statewide assessments this year, why is Vermont requiring a typical assessment administration?**

A: Although the US Department of Education (USED) published a letter that offered certain flexibilities for statewide testing this year which included shortening the test, administering the test remotely, and extending testing windows into the summer or fall, the state of Vermont chose to continue with a standard administration this year. This was done to maximize the value and use of assessment results. Objectively, the timing of USED's announcement hindered the feasibility of implementing the offered flexibilities. We feel we made the best decision considering equity, fairness, and practice.

**Explanation of flexibilities:** Please see [the Dec. 15, 2020 AOE Preparing for Statewide Assessments memo](#) discussing how VT has been considering these options throughout the year.

**Shortening the test**

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium did develop a shortened CAT blueprint for this test year. Vermont chose not to use this blueprint to preserve the test comparability and reporting structure over the years of testing. When the letter from USED was published there was not sufficient time to make the changes to the system without dramatically limiting the length of the test window, and we did not feel that it was appropriate to expect schools to have reschedule all of their testing into a one month test window.

**Remote Administration:**

While the USED letter offered the option of remote administration, VT has concerns around the comparability of offering multiple modes of administration. A fully in-person administration would at least be comparable to an extent (noting the limitation that not all students have received the same amount of in-person instruction and the assessment opportunity is distinct from other years' administrations). Results might be comparable if all students receive the same assessment experience, as opposed to some students engaging in a remote delivery (unstandardized) and some in in-person delivery (standardized). Within all scenarios, there are equity concerns (e.g., access to technology resources and the internet, homelife). The most significant concerns are around a fully remote administration.

In addition, there are no options available for remote administration of the ELP Assessment nor the Alternate assessments. This raises specific concerns for equity across groups.

**Extending the test window:**

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USED's letter suggested that states could extend the testing window into the summer and fall. While this has significant standardization concerns regarding the reliability of assessment data, VT also felt that this would be inappropriate to schedule summative tests during summer recess or at the same time students are returning to school afterward. There were specific concerns around the availability of teachers to administer the assessments within their contracted work schedules, and the availability of students to take the tests.

In summary, none of the flexibilities that USED offered states reduced the burden on students or schools while the assessments were still required. By maintaining a typical administration, we believe we are maximizing the use of the results from this test administration.

## **Audience: Students**

**Q: I am only in the school building 2 days a week; do I have to take the state tests this year?**

A: All students who would normally be eligible to test are required to test this year. We are providing opportunities for all students to participate in statewide testing starting on March 16th. Remote students will be offered testing opportunities, along with those students receiving fully in person and hybrid instruction. All assessments must be delivered to students in person as no remote options are available.

**Q: Most of my time in school this year has been from home, why can't I take the state tests from home?**

A: By maintaining an in-person administration, we are maximizing the usefulness of the results from these tests. If some students took the test at home and some at school there is a strong likelihood that the different test taking experiences could impact the scores on the tests, and this wouldn't allow us to use the results to understand what students know.

**Q: This has been a crazy year! Will we even get scores on the state tests?**

A: The 2020-21 school year has been unlike anything any of us have ever experienced. Much of our normal routines have been upended and much of what we could not control impacts the ways you have received instruction and how test scores will look. We have responded to each variable by focusing on on your wellbeing, and this is the same for carefully examining scores on the statewide tests. You will receive your scores just like any year, about 10 days after you have completed testing, but statewide scores may take a little longer to be reported because of this extra analysis.

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**Audience: Caregivers****Q: When are the state tests scheduled?**

A: The school will schedule all tests within the statewide test window for ELA, Math, and Science which begins on March 16<sup>th</sup> and ends on June 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Q: Where are the state tests happening, can my child take them at home?**

A: All assessments must be delivered to students in person at the school, remote options are not available. By maintaining a typical administration, we are maximizing the usefulness of results from these tests.

**Q: Will state testing be safe for my child?**

A: Test administration protocols will be implemented in a way that maintains safety for both your student and the test administrators. We will communicate with you (students and families) about the schedule of testing opportunities, and any health protocols being provided for your child.

**Q: My child is unable to attend school in person due to significant health concerns, how can they participate in state testing?**

A: The state has provided a non-participation code for students who are medically fragile, have participated in fully remote instruction, and can't participate in statewide testing due to medical fragility.

**Q: My child is fully remote to limit any possible COVID-19 exposure, we are not willing to send them to the school for in-person testing, how can they participate in state testing?**

A: The state has provided a non-participation code for students who have participated in fully remote instruction and have been given opportunities to participate in statewide testing but are unable to participate in person.

**Q: This has been a crazy year; will my child even get results from their state tests?**

A: The 2020-21 school year has been unlike anything any of us have ever experienced. Much of our normal routines have been upended and much of what we could not control impacts the ways our students receive instruction and how they will score on statewide tests. We have responded to each variable by attempting to focus on your student's wellbeing, and this is the same for carefully examining scores on the statewide tests. Students will receive their scores just like any year, about 10 days after they have completed testing, but statewide scores may take a little longer to be reported because of this extra analysis.

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