

TNReady Teacher Frequently Asked Questions

Updated: Dec. 3, 2015

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General Questions

1. *What is the best way to prepare students for TNReady?*

TNReady is a new and improved TCAP assessment for English language arts (ELA) and math. TNReady is aligned to the Tennessee State Standards, which are the learning expectations for students in every grade level and content area. The best preparation for TNReady is strong instruction throughout the year rooted in our state standards.

2. *Do MICA and MIST hold students to the same expectations? I heard MICA was easier.*

MICA and MIST hold students to the same high expectations that will be assessed on TNReady. The items included on both MICA and MIST are chosen from the same bank of items as the operational TNReady assessment.

3. *How should I use MICA?*

You should use MICA to gauge student learning and to increase their comfort with the test design and online platform. MICA has between 50-70 items per grade, displays the full range of standards, and is continuously available online (<http://www.micatime.com>).

4. *Where else can I find other practice items similar to the items that will be asked on TNReady?*

The only state-approved places to find items similar in style to TNReady are MICA and MIST. The items for the TNReady operational test, the MICA item sampler, and the MIST sample test come from the same item bank, which has been reviewed by Tennessee educators. Because all items come from the same bank, we are able to say that the items on MICA and MIST are the closest to TNReady items.

5. *Can teachers proctor their own TNReady exams?*

It's considered best practice for another teacher to proctor the exam; however, teachers are not prohibited from proctoring their own exams.

6. *Why is the testing window so long?*

We believe this will allow districts and schools to schedule the assessment on whatever timeline works for them, tailoring the testing window to their needs. We encourage educators to keep the school operating as normally as possible during the entire window, versus "shutting down" for testing. Subsections can often fit into smaller portions of the day, much like a unit or chapter test, so the day should feel like a typical one for students, whether or not they are testing.

7. *What do teachers have to cover up on their walls during test administration?*

An instructional environment should be maintained during testing windows. It is not necessary to conceal or remove instructional or reference materials in the testing area, the classrooms, or hallways. Math tables are an exception. Math tables (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) should be concealed or removed from the testing area during non-calculator subtest of math assessments for Part II. However, teachers should not decorate walls with the intention of providing extra support to students. A good rule of thumb is to only have material on your walls for TNReady that you would be comfortable having on your walls for your own classroom assessments.

8. *How do I know what accommodations my students can receive?*

TNReady has been intentionally designed to provide tools to support all students. The MIST platform has many built-in accessibility features available to all students. There is also a suite of additional accommodations for English learners and students on an IEP or 504 plan. Examples of these accommodations include extended time, adult transcription, frequent breaks, and a paper-based test. The [TNReady accommodations website](#) and specifically the [TNReady Accessibility Guidelines](#) provide detailed information for educators, including more technical information on allowable test administration conditions and accessibility features.

9. *How will my students' scores affect my teacher effectiveness rating this year?*

TVAAS will not compare students' absolute performance on TNReady to their absolute performance on the previous TCAP tests. Instead, students will be expected to perform about as well on TNReady as their peers who had similar TCAP scores last year. Because *all* students are making the transition to a new assessment at the same time, this levels the playing field. The student score that will be factored into TVAAS is based on academic growth within that relative comparison to other students with similar academic histories, not based on a student's overall performance. In previous transitions to more difficult tests, teacher evaluation scores remained consistent despite a decline in student proficiency.

If you have multiple years of data, you will receive two TVAAS Evaluation Composites this year:

- The first TVAAS Evaluation Composite is a multi-year calculation that weighs scores available from the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years at 25% of the overall teacher effectiveness score.
- The second TVAAS Evaluation Composite is a single-year calculation, generated from the 2015-16 Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP, which includes TNReady), weighted at 10% of the overall teacher effectiveness score.
- *If the single-year TVAAS score (the 10% measure) is higher than the multi-year TVAAS score (the 25% measure), the single-year score will count as the full 35% of the overall effectiveness score.*

If you have one year of data, the single-year TVAAS Evaluation Composite will count as 10% of your overall evaluation.

If you teach a non-tested grade/subject, school-wide TVAAS data will account for 10% of your overall teacher effectiveness score.

If you teach a non-tested grade/subject in a district using the approved portfolio growth model, your portfolio score will continue to be weighted at 35%.

As a reminder, TVAAS has been designed so that when a student's score is dramatically out of line with the rest of the student's testing history, that score is flagged as an outlier and removed from the data prior to analysis. The formulas for identifying outliers are more likely to flag and remove a score that is too low than one that is too high compared to the rest of the student's test scores. In this way, teachers are protected from data irregularities that may significantly affect the calculation of the teacher value-added measures.

Visit team-tn.org/evaluation/score-calculation-guidance/ for further information.

10. *In the past, students had to sit the whole time they were finished and could not even read. Is this still true?*

Students do have to sit the entire duration of the allotted testing time, even if the entire class is finished. However, students **are** allowed to read or do other quiet activities that are not related to the content area being tested.

11. *What are the guidelines for the TNReady make-ups? I heard that they had to be given within a certain time frame and/or within a certain number of days? If so, would those be school days? What happens if a child is out of that range?*

Tests are not required to be made up in the five day school testing window, but they are required to be made up within the state-testing window. For example, if your school tested from April 18-22, a student could make up the test until the state window closes on May 13.

TNReady English Language Arts

1. Do I need to do anything special to prepare for TNReady ELA?

The best preparation for TNReady is strong instruction throughout the year rooted in our state standards, including an understanding of the three instructional shifts highlighted in the standards (discussed in #2). On the TNReady ELA assessment, students will be asked text-dependent, grade-appropriate questions. Text-dependent questions require a close, careful reading of a grade-appropriate, complex text. The answer is found in the text, not from background or outside knowledge. We encourage educators to provide students with frequent opportunities to engage with complex texts and answer text-dependent questions.

2. What are the three instructional shifts?

The three instructional shifts for ELA are knowledge, evidence, and vocabulary.

- 1) Knowledge:** Students build background knowledge through content-rich informational and nonfiction texts.
- 2) Evidence:** Reading, writing, and speaking are grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational.
- 3) Vocabulary:** Students have regular practice with complex texts and academic language.

3. What is the expected length for student writing on TNReady?

While, in general, a multi-paragraph response is appropriate, the length of the response is less important than the quality of the response. Students should respond completely to the task.

4. How can I score the writing tasks?

The rubrics for the writing tasks are available on the department website ([here](#)) using the dropdown menu under the section "ELA Tools & Scoring."

5. Which writing modes should my students be practicing?

Students should practice all types of writing. On TNReady, students will be asked to write essays from two of the following three modes of writing (in any combination): (1) argument/opinion, (2) informative/explanatory, and (3) narrative. For example, a student could receive an argument/opinion task and a narrative task. Or, a student could receive an informative/explanatory task and an argument/opinion task. Or, a student could receive an informative/explanatory task and a narrative task.

6. Where can I find practice writing tasks?

Between MICA and MIST, students have a minimum of three tasks per grade with all writing modes represented within each grade band (i.e., grades 3-5, grades 6-8, and English I-III). The table below has a breakdown of the writing tasks available for each grade level.

Grade	MICA Item Sampler	MIST Practice Test
3	2 Informative/explanatory tasks 1 narrative task	1 narrative task
4	2 informative/explanatory tasks	1 narrative task
5	1 opinion task 1 informative/explanatory task	1 narrative task
6	1 argument task 2 informative/explanatory tasks	1 narrative task
7	3 informative/explanatory tasks	1 narrative task
8	1 argument task 2 informative/explanatory tasks	1 informative/explanatory task
English I	3 argument tasks 1 narrative task	1 informative/explanatory task
English II	2 informative/explanatory tasks	1 narrative task
English III	2 informative/explanatory tasks	1 narrative task

7. Are all writing tasks on the TNReady assessment being scored?

Yes, all writing tasks will be scored. Narrative writing is being field tested this year, and while it will be scored, the score will be used for internal purposes only in order to develop future test questions.

8. Why are narrative writing tasks included in MICA and MIST if they don't "count"?

Narrative writing is an expectation of the Tennessee State Standards for ELA. Students are expected to learn the three modes of writing, including narrative. Together, MICA and MIST provide sample items for all standards that are assessed, both field-test and operational items.

9. *I thought all writing had to be text-dependent. How can we have narrative tasks that are text-dependent and not basic “creative writing” tasks?*

On TNReady, all writing students will be asked to produce is text-dependent, even narrative writing. For narrative writing tasks, students will be asked to use the prompting text in order to develop their story using effective techniques, such as including relevant descriptive details and providing a well-structured event sequences. Thus, a strong narrative essay requires a close read of text to gather the details to make the story cohesive. For example, students may be asked the following: to write a narrative from the point of view from a character in the text; to write the ending or beginning of a narrative text; or, to write a narrative story after reading informational texts. All of these narrative writing tasks require a close reading of the complex text provided. Students do not need to bring background knowledge to the narrative tasks, but they will be asked to use relevant details from the prompting text to complete the task.

10. *Is there a list of Tier II/academic vocabulary words?*

No, there is not a list of Tier II/academic vocabulary words. On TNReady, students are expected to determine the meaning of vocabulary words based on the context of the grade-appropriate text. As such, any word within the text that can be defined based on context is fair game for assessment.

11. *If there’s no list of Tier II/academic vocabulary words, how can I teach my students the words they need to know to pass TNReady?*

The best way to prepare students for success with academic vocabulary on TNReady is by teaching close reading of complex texts. During close reading of complex texts, students should practice determining the meaning of Tier II/ academic vocabulary words based on the context.

12. *What is a “passing” or proficient score for the writing tasks?*

The scoring for writing tasks will be determined during the range-finding process. Rangefinders are Tennessee educators who will work with the Tennessee Department of Education to score actual student writing samples against the state standards and the writing rubrics in order to set expectations at each score point. These guidelines will then be used to score all student responses.

13. *How can I score the narrative writing tasks since we don’t have sample papers?*

Until the range-finding process is complete, the best way to score all writing tasks is to reference the Tennessee State Standards and the writing rubrics.

TNReady Mathematics

- 1. Will all students have a no-calculator portion on the TNReady mathematics assessment?**
Yes, in all grade levels, the first subtest of Part II will be taken without a calculator. The [calculator guidance](#) provides some high-level information on when calculators will and will not be permitted on TNReady, and it includes a list of many of the approved calculators. The calculator policy applies to all students, [including those with disabilities](#).
- 2. What types of questions will students be asked on the no-calculation portion?**
The questions on the no-calculator portion will include friendlier numbers and may assess standards that require little or no calculation. We have published [additional clarification and examples](#) about the types of questions on which students would and would not be able to use a calculator.
- 3. How will fluency be assessed on TNReady?**
Fluency will be assessed on the no-calculator portion of TNReady in grades 3-6. Fluency standards requiring unspecified, multi-digit computation will be assessed within reasonable limits.
- 4. What standards will be assessed on the performance tasks for grades 3-8?**
The TNReady test blueprints were updated in October. A line was added to specifically address the clusters to be assessed by the performance task during the 2015-16 school year. The updated blueprints can be found [here](#).
- 5. Can students use graph paper for scratch paper or does their scratch paper have to be plain white paper?**
Students may use graph paper as scratch paper.
- 6. Do students have to use the calculator on the MIST platform, or will they be allowed to use their own?**
Students may use their own calculators from the approved list [here](#).
- 7. How do I know which standards that are not major work of the grade will be on the mathematics Part I of TNReady?**
The TNReady blueprints, found [here](#), highlight which standards could be assessed on Part I of TNReady.

- 8. Will any of the mathematics standards colored in yellow on the high school standards documents be assessed on Part I of TNReady? For reference, the standards documents for each high school math course can be downloaded from the dropdown menu [here](#), under the heading “High School Standards.”**

The standards color coded yellow on the standards documents are labeled as “additional standards.” The color coding does not prohibit or ensure that a standard will be assessed on Part I of TNReady. A complete list of the standards that could be assessed on Part I are found in the TNReady blueprints found [here](#).

- 9. What volume and surface area formulas will be provided for high school geometry students?**

The TNReady reference page that is available to students during testing is found [here](#). Any formulas that are not found on this document will not be provided for students on the assessment.

- 10. Where can I find an example of a high school level performance task so that my students will be prepared for one on TNReady?**

High school students will not be assessed with a performance task on the 2015-16 TNReady exam. The department will release an example performance task into MICA during the testing cycle when performance tasks are added onto the high school TNReady assessment.

- 11. When will performance tasks be included on the mathematics high school portion of TNReady?**

Performance tasks will not be on the 2015-16 or 2016-17 administration of TNReady for high school mathematics students. The target date for including performance tasks to the operational TNReady assessment is during the 2017-18 school year because this will be the first school year to assess the revised Tennessee math standards. Math standards are currently being reviewed by a committee of Tennessee educators and will be shared with the State Board of Education for first read in January 2016. The final reading of the revised standards will be in spring 2016, and implementation will take place in the 2017-18 school year.