

## Tennessee

### Gateway Examinations

#### Part I: Policy Trends

##### **Type of test**

The Gateway Examinations are end-of-course, criterion-referenced exams. They are also standards-based exams because they align with the state's content standards.

##### **Purpose**

The purpose of the test is to:

- Provide schools with student academic diagnostic information
- Determine prospective high school graduates' mastery of the state curriculum
- Encourage districts and schools to identify and serve students at risk of academic failure
- Provide data to state policymakers on student attainment of state education goals to inform educational policy decisions
- Increase alignment of local curriculum and programs of instruction with state education standards
- Promote equity of opportunity across all student groups
- Meet a state mandate

##### **Major changes in exit exam policy since the 2007-08 school year or any pending changes**

The state high school curriculum has undergone changes that became effective in the 2009-10 school year. These changes require an alignment of the end-of-course assessments. The Gateway requirements were "sunset" beginning with 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in 2009-10, requiring that cohort and after to pass 10 end-of-course assessments during their high school years that count for 25% of the student's grade. All alignments were completed as the new tests became operational in 2009-10.

##### **Status of the state's decision regarding the Common Core State Standards and impact of that decision on exit exam policies**

The state has adopted the Common Core State Standards in both English language arts and math. The end of course exams will be updated with any new Common Core standards by subject and grade.

##### **Test used by colleges or universities for undergraduate admission?**

Neither public universities nor community colleges use the Gateway Exam to determine undergraduate admissions or course placement. However, students cannot be admitted to a public university or community college without having received a high school diploma.

<b>Year first administered</b>	2001-02
<b>Year diplomas first withheld</b>	2005
<b>Subjects tested</b>	English I, English II, English III, Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, Biology I, chemistry, physics, and U.S. history  Beginning with students entering 9 <sup>th</sup> grade in 2009-10 and after, students will be required to pass all 10 subjects to receive a regular high school diploma. All of the subjects except physics are currently required for graduation.
<b>Types of questions</b>	Multiple choice
<b>Grade first administered</b>	Varies. Students take the exams after completing the course associated with the exam. Most students take the exams in high school, although students who take Algebra I in 7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> grade may take the exam when they complete the course.
<b>Grade(s) exam aligned to</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> grade standards
<b>Number of retakes allowed before the end of grade 12</b>	Three administrations each year; students may continue to retake the test at each administration until they pass the course.
<b>Retakes after grade 12</b>	Students entering high school prior to the 2009-10 school year who have met all graduation requirements except passing the exit exams may retake the exams after completing 12 <sup>th</sup> grade with no limit on age or number of retakes and still receive a regular diploma.
<b>Does the state have reciprocity with other states?</b>	No
<b>Exit exam used for No Child Left Behind?</b>	Tennessee uses the results from the first time a student takes the graduation exams to meet the requirements of NCLB. Starting in 2007-08, the science test was also used to meet NCLB requirements. Tennessee received ED approval to allow a “best score” in addition to the first-time student score, should a student be assessed more than one time in the year the student was a first-time test taker. TN has moved to end-of-course exams that are not graduation requirements. These new end-of-course exams count as part of the student grade. The students entering high school in the 2009-10 school year and thereafter are required to pass the course to earn the credit and not necessarily pass the test for graduation purposes. The

	<p>“best” score would still apply if the student had to retake the course and exam for credit purposes.</p>
<p><b>Same cut score for graduation and NCLB?</b></p>	<p>No, the cut score is aimed at college and career readiness and is higher than minimal proficiency, which would equate to a 70 score on the exam.</p>
<p><b>Evaluations of state exit exam</b></p>	<p>The state had an external evaluation of the state exit exam conducted by Norman Webb, senior research scientist with the Wisconsin Center for Education Research and the National Institute for Science Education, in 2005. The results of the evaluation are publicly available as part of the Peer Review for Assessments documentation.</p> <p>TN is in the process of evaluation of the new assessment system. No new external evaluation has been completed yet. The new external evaluation will be made public when completed.</p>
<p><b>State test contractor</b></p>	<p>Pearson Educational Measurement</p>
<p><b>Does the state provide students with alternate paths to graduation?</b></p>	<p>The state does not allow students to earn a regular diploma by passing a substitute test or submitting a waiver or appeal. However, students who do not receive a regular diploma because they could not pass the exit exams are eligible to receive a certificate of attendance.</p>
<p><b>Alternate paths to graduation specifically for English language learners</b></p>	<p>No, but English language learners who do not receive a regular diploma because they could not pass the exit exams are eligible for the certificate of attendance available to all students.</p> <p>There are accommodations that may be used for ELL students that participate in the exit exams. Accommodations are as follows: extended time, bilingual dictionary, read-aloud in English internal test instructions and read-aloud in English internal test items.</p>
<p><b>Alternate paths to graduation specifically for students with disabilities</b></p>	<p>A special education diploma is available for students with disabilities who do not receive a regular diploma because they could not pass the exit exams.</p> <p>There are accommodations that may be used for students with disabilities taking the exit exams. The following may be used, provided an individualized education program (IEP) team has concurred: extended time, read-aloud internal test instructions,</p>

read-aloud internal test items, prompting upon request, interpreter signs/cues, student reads into audio recorder: plays back to self, calculator/math tables, manipulatives, assistive technology (special approval), scribe, and unique accommodations (special approval required).

**Who makes decisions on whether a student is eligible to use alternate paths?**

The local education agency (LEA) determines if a student is enrolled in courses that would lead to a regular diploma, and an IEP team must make the final determination.

**How are students identified as eligible for alternate paths to graduate?**

There are no applications for a certificate of attendance or special education diploma. These are default alternates to the regular diploma.

The LEA in conjunction with the IEP team assesses the student transcript and makes the award based on completion of the graduation requirements. The determination is made at the point that students have not met the regular graduation requirements and are leaving school. (LEAs provide this information to students and parents/guardians in normal progress reporting throughout the high school years. The final determination is made prior to graduation.)

**When calculating the graduation rate for adequate yearly progress (AYP) purposes, does the state count students taking alternate paths together with graduates who passed the high school exit exams?**

No. Students that receive the certificate of attendance and the special education diploma are not considered high school graduates for any reporting. These two credentials are provided as proof of participation and attendance and as proof that the student was enrolled in instruction for the maximum time allowable under state law.

**How many full-time equivalent staff in the state department of education are involved in implementing alternate paths?**

One FTE works with all graduation areas.

**Types of assistance the state provides for all districts to raise *initial* pass rates for all students on the high school exit exam**

The state does *not* provide assistance or remediation to all districts to help students who have failed in their initial attempt to pass the exit exam.

**Extra cells**

**Types of assistance or**

The state offers technical assistance to help:

**remediation the state provides for all districts to help students who have failed to pass the exit exam**

- Teachers administer the exam, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, and train-the-trainer workshops;
- All teachers prepare students for the exam, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, and train-the-trainer workshops;
- Teachers become more proficient in their content area, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and train-the-trainer workshops;
- Schools identify and target students for assistance, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, grants to districts, and fiscal resources to fund local personnel to provide assistance;
- Schools implement comprehensive school reform, which includes online assistance, specialist(s) in the state education agency, and train-the-trainer workshops;
- Districts improve professional development for teachers, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, grants to districts, and fiscal resources to fund local personnel to provide assistance;
- All districts improve the instructional leadership provided by administrators, which includes specialist(s) in the state education agency, field-based specialists, train-the-trainer workshops, grants to districts, and fiscal resources to fund local personnel to provide assistance.

The state also provides state-developed courses specifically designed to prepare students for the exam and exam preparation materials for students and teachers.

**Does the state provide funding for remediation?**

Yes. Funding for school districts is available in the Basic Education Program.

**Are districts mandated by law to provide remediation?**

Yes. School districts must provide an opportunity for remediation to any student not passing the Gateway Exams.

**Are students required to participate in remediation? Extra cells**

No

**Part II: Student Performance****Initial pass rates, 2008-09**

<b>Percentage of Students Passing Exit Exam on First Attempt, 2008-09</b>			
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>Algebra I</b>	<b>English II</b>	<b>Biology I</b>
All students	84.8%	97.2%	97.1%
White	88.6%	98.1%	98.3%
African American	74.7%	94.9%	93.8%
Latino	82.7%	95.9%	95.9%
Asian	92.6%	98.7%	98.3%
Native American	88.3%	97.5%	97.1%
English language learners	71.9%	85.6%	86.2%
Migrant	82.4%	87.5%	94.7%
Students with disabilities	58.3%	85.6%	85.8%
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	78.9%	95.2%	95.1%
<b>Passing score (scale)</b>			

Note: Data provided by the state department of education.

**Denominator used when calculating these rates:** Number of students tested.

**Initial pass rates, 2009-10**

<b>Percentage of Students Passing End-of-Course Exam on First Attempt, 2009-10</b>					
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>English I</b>	<b>English II</b>	<b>Algebra I</b>	<b>Biology I</b>	<b>U.S. History</b>
All students	61.8%	59.6%	40.6%	53.9%	96.6%
White	70.1%	68.1%	47.3%	62.6%	98.2%
African American	40.1%	37.4%	23.3%	30.5%	92.5%
Latino	48.6%	47.7%	34.0%	44.2%	95.3%
Asian	76.1%	73.9%	56.8%	68.4%	97.7%
Native American	57.8%	65.9%	38.5%	58.1%	95.8%
English language learners	10.7%	12.1%	18.9%	13.4%	80.2%
Migrant	16.7%	22.2%	11.1%	12.5%	100.0%
Students with disabilities	19.0%	17.3%	13.1%	17.1%	84.1%
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	46.4%	43.3%	30.5%	38.4%	94.0%
<b>Passing score (scale)</b>					

Note: Data provided by the state department of education.

**Denominator used when calculating these rates:** Number of students tested.

**Cumulative pass rates,**

**2008-09****Percentage of Students Passing by the End of 12<sup>th</sup> Grade, 2008-09**

<b>Student Group</b>	<b>Algebra I</b>	<b>Biology I</b>	<b>English II</b>	<b>Algebra I</b>
All students	74.3%	95.0%	94.1%	74.3%
White	83.1%	97.4%	96.2%	83.1%
African American	56.6%	89.0%	88.8%	56.6%
Latino	71.3%	92.6%	91.0%	71.3%
Asian	85.9%	96.8%	95.6%	85.9%
Native American	77.3%	94.6%	93.6%	77.3%
English language learners	58.6%	79.9%	77.2%	58.6%
Migrant	80.6%	87.5%	90.5%	80.6%
Students with disabilities	47.0%	80.3%	74.4%	47.0%
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	65.9%	91.5%	90.2%	65.9%

Note: Data provided by the state department of education.

**Denominator used when calculating these rates:** Number of students tested.

**Cumulative pass rates,  
2009-10****Percentage of Students Passing by the End of 12<sup>th</sup> Grade, 2009-10**

<b>Student Group</b>	<b>Algebra I</b>	<b>Biology I</b>	<b>English II</b>
All students	74.6%	95.3%	95.0%
White	82.7%	97.4%	96.8%
African American	58.0%	89.8%	90.6%
Latino	72.4%	92.5%	91.9%
Asian	88.0%	98.4%	96.8%
Native American	78.3%	96.8%	95.2%
English language learners	57.0%	78.4%	74.7%
Migrant	65.2%	66.7%	72.7%
Students with disabilities	48.0%	81.3%	78.3%
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	66.0%	92.1%	91.7%

Note: Data provided by the state department of education.

**Denominator used when calculating these rates:** Number of students tested.

**State Graduation Rates**

<b>Student Group</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>
All students	82.2%	Not Available
White	86.0%	
African American	72.1%	
Latino	76.1%	
Asian	89.9%	
Native American	77.3%	
English language learners	NA	

Migrant	NA	
Students with disabilities	NA	
Free or reduced-price lunch eligible	NA	

Note: Data provided by the state department of education.

**Current state graduation rate calculation formula for AYP purposes**

Leaver Rate (will change to the Adjusted Cohort Rate in 2011)