



Understanding the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination

Understanding the WKCE

In Wisconsin, students are assessed using the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE). These assessments are designed to monitor the progress of students throughout their education to ensure that student learning is aligned to the expectations in the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards (WMAS), the framework for the state's curriculum. All states are required to assess students in Reading and Mathematics in grades 3-8 and once in high school; in Wisconsin these requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act are accomplished through these assessments.

In the coming years, Wisconsin has joined the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and is working to develop a comprehensive assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards. These standards are a model of best practices from across the states. This work is funded by a Race to the Top grant.

Some of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination assessments are more high-stakes than others. The assessments given to students in 4th and 8th grade will determine that student's ability to advance to the next grade. Other assessments given over the years are more of a measure of student's levels of proficiency at the skills and knowledge of the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards. Students who are not meeting proficiency levels may require remedial help and such an assessment can help target that instruction. These scores also play a role in teacher development and the determination of adequate yearly progress at individual schools and across the state.

The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) assesses students in the subjects of Reading, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. For students in grades 3, 5, 6 and 7 the assessments are given only in Reading and Mathematics. For students in grades 4, 8 and 10 the assessments are given in all four of the subject areas.

Format of the WKCE

The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) covers the content laid out by the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards. In Reading and Language Arts, students in grades 3-8 and 10 are tested in comprehension, analysis and evaluation of reading and in vocabulary development. In Math, students are required to show proficiency in mathematical processes, numbers, geometry, measurement, statistics/probability, and algebra. These questions are covered at levels appropriate to each grade.

Students in grades 4, 8 and 10 taking the Science portion of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination will be assessed in the nature of science and scientific inquiry, physical science, earth and space science, life and environmental science, and issues in science and society. For students at the same grade levels, the Social Studies assessment is designed to cover geography, history, politics/civics, and economic and sociological factors.

On all the assessments, questions are asked in multiple-choice and short written response formats. The Writing Assessment given to 4, 8 and 10th asks to students to write an essay based on a given prompt.

Taking the WKCE

The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE) are given in the Fall, generally in November. School districts will provide detailed information about time and dates. The timing is slightly different throughout the grade levels; 3rd graders have a shorter administration time than 10th graders. However, the formats of the assessments are standardized throughout the grade levels. For the Reading Assessment, students have three sessions of approximately 40 minutes each. Additionally, the Language Arts and Writing Assessment given to 4th, 8th and 10th graders has two sections, one being the writing prompt, and students have 30 minutes for each section.

On the Mathematics Assessment, for students in grades 3-5 there are three sessions of about 30 minutes each; for students in grades 6-8 and 10 there are four sections. The Science Assessment given to 4th, 8th has one 40 minute section and for 10th graders has two sections of 25 minutes. The same format is used for the Social Studies Assessment as for the Science for students in 4th, 8th and 10th grades. For students with disabilities who require testing and timing accommodations, those are available per a child's Individual Education Plan.

Results of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE) are provided on two levels. One is a scaled score and the other is a proficiency level. The scaled score offers the numerical version of the score: it represents the number correct based on the number of questions and their value; the scales are different for different assessments. Scoring guides provide both a list of the scale for each assessment and what the score number correlates to on a proficient level.

There are four proficiency levels that a child may achieve in each of the content areas: Advanced, Proficient, Basic and Minimal Performance. Students who are performing at an Advanced level show in-depth understanding of the academic knowledge and skills, students at the Proficient level show competency in the tested knowledge and skills, students performing at a Basic level show some academic knowledge and skills for their grade level, and students at the Minimal Performance level have a limited knowledge and skills in the content taught. For students at the Basic and Minimal Performance levels the assessments will help provide an understanding of where additional instructional support is needed.

Get Your Child Ready for the WKCE

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