



Understanding Student Testing

A Toolkit for Families

Tennessee Department of Education | March 2024



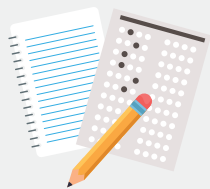
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Introduction

Welcome to **Understanding Student Testing: A Toolkit for Families**. We are thrilled to partner with you to support your child’s education. In this toolkit, we have gathered resources to help you better understand the components of the various tests your child will be taking at school.

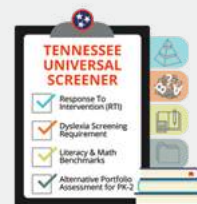
Within this toolkit, you will discover helpful information including:



The Types of Tests for Tennessee Students



The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP)



Information on Universal Screeners

Please remember that you are not alone. Your child’s school, teachers, and our entire educational community are here to support you every step of the way. We encourage you to explore this toolkit, ask questions, and engage with your child’s teacher and school.

Thank you for being committed to your child’s education. Together we can create a bright future filled with endless possibilities.



Understanding Student Testing



Taking tests has always been a part of school. Today, in addition to the regular classroom tests children have each week, there are other important tests your child will take throughout the year including universal screeners and TCAP (Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program).

Here we provide you with helpful information about each of these tests and how the information we get from these assessments helps to guide the teacher and school in planning supports for your child.



Classroom Assessments provide teachers with important information on how to adjust instruction or provide support to children based on their individual needs. These assessments may occur throughout the week for children at all grade levels.



A **Universal Reading Screener** is a test that measures student performance on grade-level reading skills. These tests are given to students in kindergarten through eighth grade and are administered three times per school year. Pre-K students may also take a reading screener.



TCAP, or the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program, is an end-of-the-year test given to students in grades 3-8 to measure learning in English Language Arts (ELA), math, science, and social studies. Some districts choose to also give TCAP to second-grade students.

You can find more information about the tests your child takes throughout the year by accessing your school district or public charter school's website. Districts and charter schools will post student testing requirements and schedules each year.



Classroom Assessments

Regular classroom assessments or tests are used by teachers to help them know exactly where each child is in his or her progression of learning. The results from classroom tests help teachers plan and prepare for the best next steps of learning for all students.

Classroom assessments are used to check progress towards student mastery of Tennessee Academic Standards throughout the year and are often aligned with state-approved high-quality instructional materials.

- Some classroom assessments check student knowledge before a unit of study.
- Some assessments happen during the learning process as teachers watch students while they work and make notes about any areas they may need to reteach.
- Some assessments check for understanding and evaluate student learning at the end of a unit.



Universal Screeners

A Universal Screener is an *assessment tool used to measure a student's performance on grade-level skills*, including areas of need, in reading, math, and written expression.

- These tests are given to students in grades K-6 in the fall, winter, and spring. Students in grades 7-8 are given a universal screener once each year, typically in the fall, while students in high school are monitored using a different method called the early warning system.
- Pre-K students may also take a universal reading screener.
- Each district or public charter school has a choice of which screener they use from a state-approved list.
- Each child's performance on the universal reading screener is used by schools to determine if they have a significant reading deficiency or are at risk of one.
- This universal screener along with other assessments and teacher observation will be used to help determine a child's intervention or support.

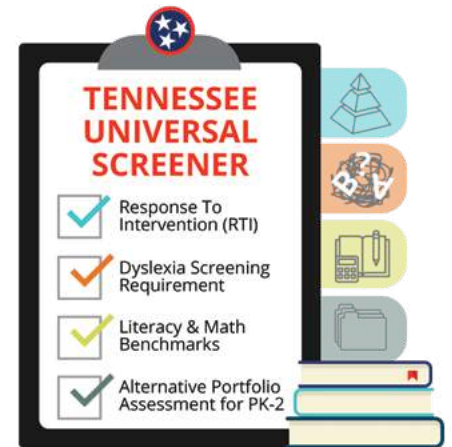
Children are initially identified as having a significant reading deficiency if they fall into one of the following categories:

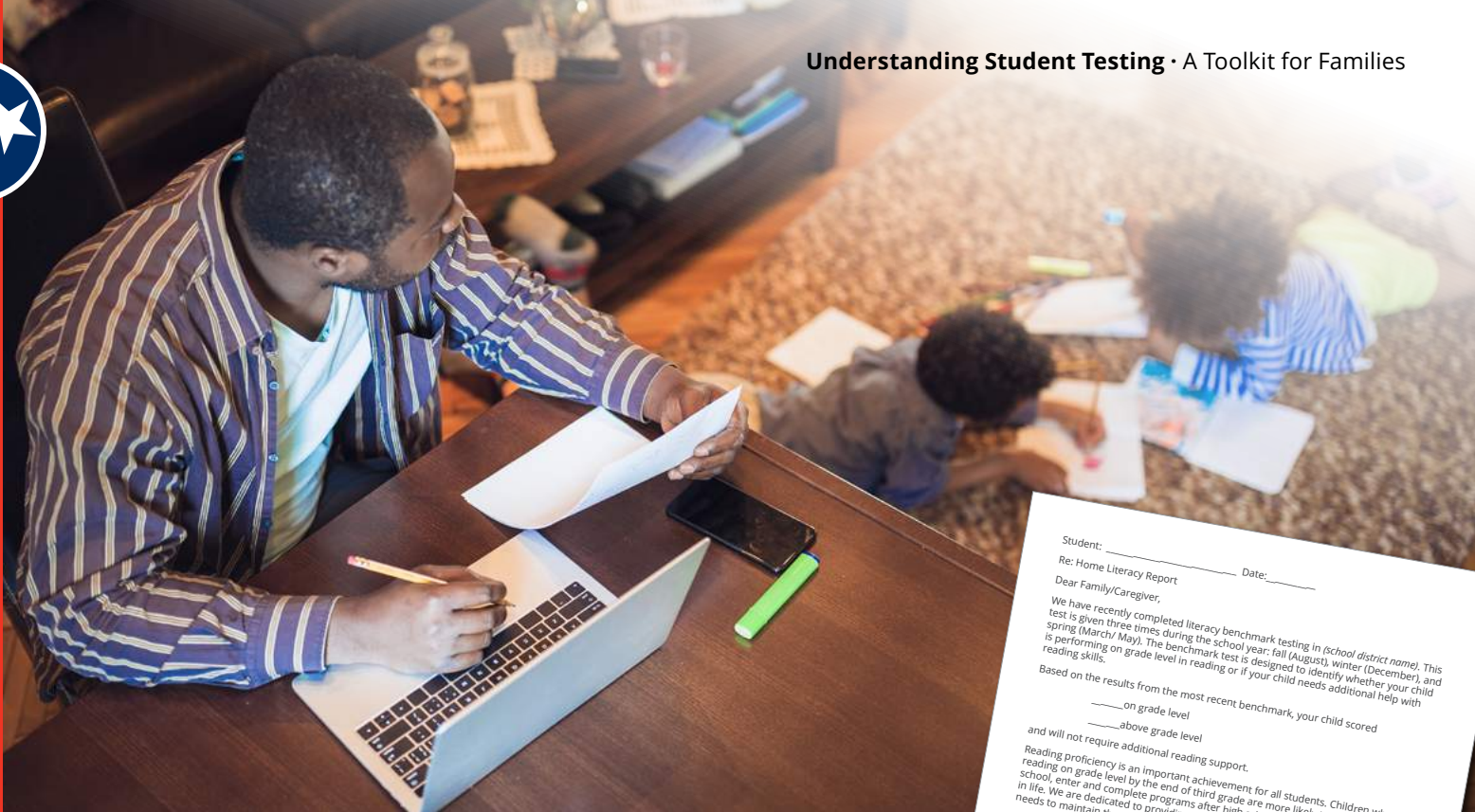
- In K-3, a child has a significant reading deficiency if they score in the 15th percentile or below on a universal reading screener.
- In grades 4-5, a child is considered to have a significant reading deficiency if they score below proficient on the English Language Arts (ELA) section of the most recent TCAP.

For each child identified with a significant reading deficiency:

- The school-based team will determine the most appropriate intervention support.
- The progress for each child placed in intervention for reading support will be monitored throughout the school year.
- Any K-5 child identified with a significant reading deficiency will receive priority for tutoring, summer programming, and other student supports.

Please contact your child's teacher or school if you have questions about your child's reading progress.





Home Literacy Report (HLR)

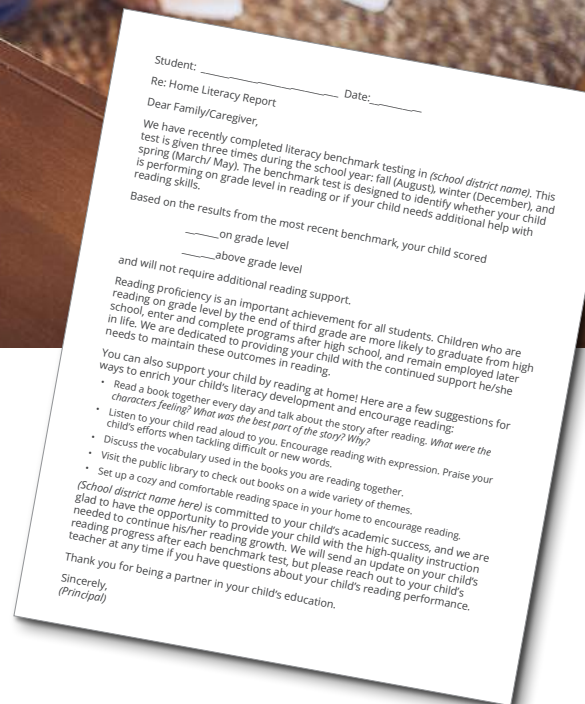
A Home Literacy Report is a written report provided to a child's family by the district or charter school describing his or her progress in foundational literacy skills.

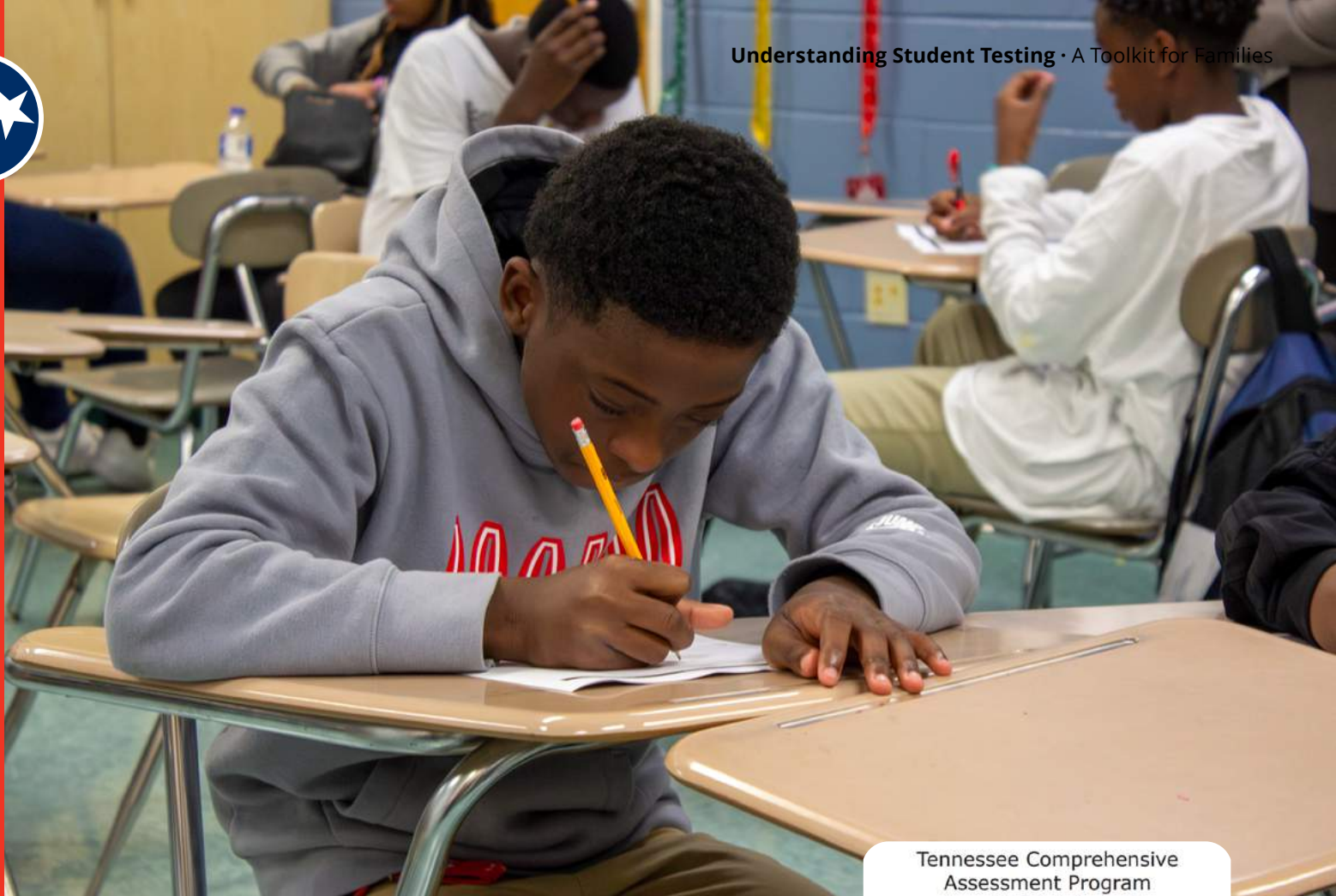
Home Literacy Reports must be sent home three times each year for children identified as having a significant reading deficiency in grades K-3 and at least one time each year for children in grades 4-5.

What will you find in an HLR if your child is in grade K-3?

- Information about the importance of reading on grade level by the end of third grade,
- Ideas for reading activities you can do at home to support reading,
- Information about your child's early reading progress based on the results from the universal reading screener and how your child will be supported in reading including specific reading interventions recommended for your child, and
- Information about retention for third-grade students with an achievement level of approaching or below on the English Language Arts (ELA) portion of their most recent TCAP test. (Additional information about the pathway to 4th grade is available at any time from your child's school.)

Home Literacy Reports for children in grades 4-5 will have similar grade-appropriate information.





Tennessee Comprehensive
Assessment Program

TCAP



Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP)

The **TCAP** is an end-of-the-year test given to students in grades 3-8 to measure learning and progress in multiple subject areas. Although not state required, some districts also require a TCAP assessment for 2nd grade students.

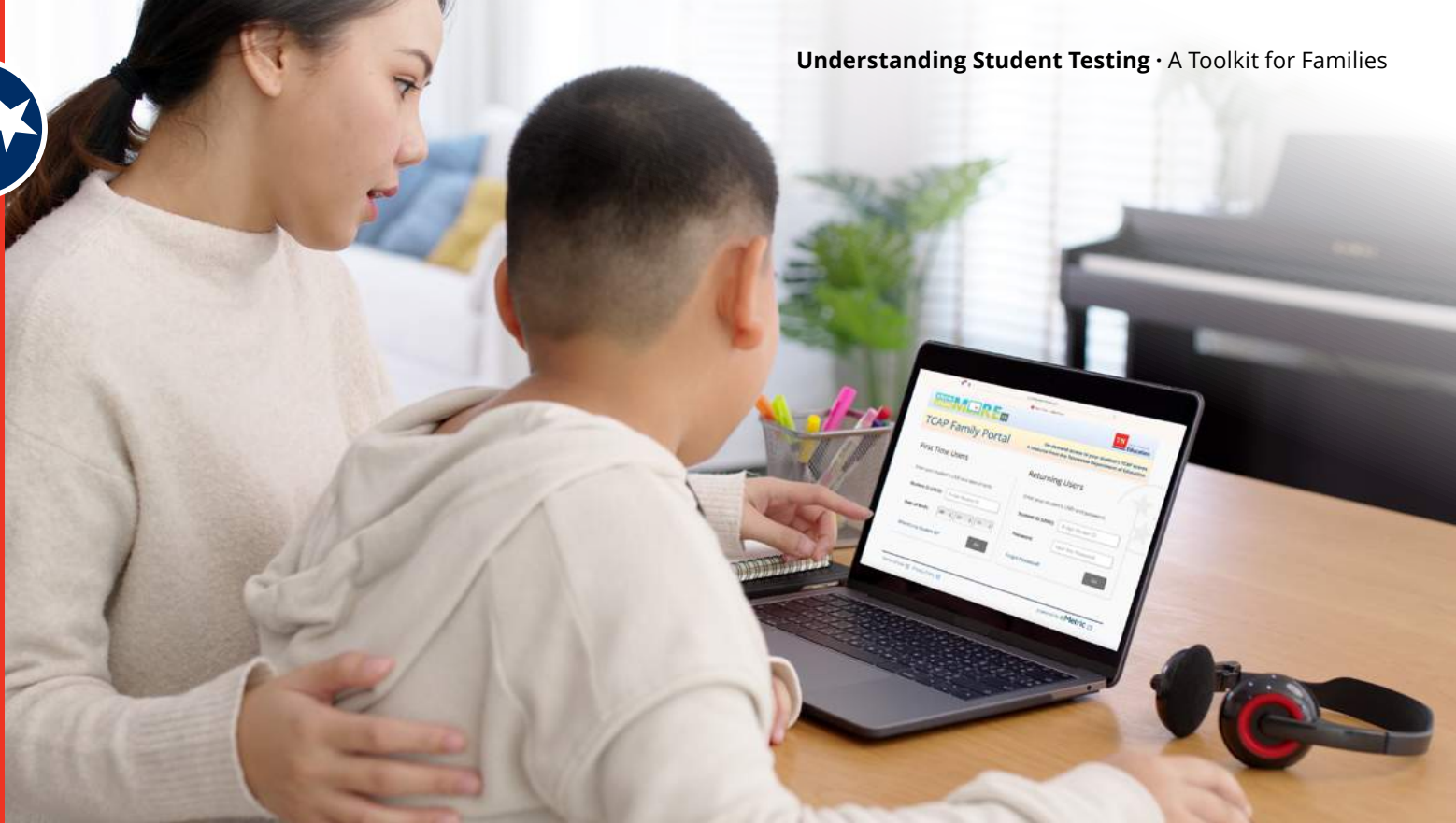
TCAP measures two things: Achievement and Growth.

Achievement

- Achievement scores provide a snapshot of your child's learning level related to Tennessee's academic standards for each subject and grade.
- Achievement scores show whether your child falls below, approaches, meets, or exceeds the grade level expectations of the state standards.

Growth

- Growth scores recognize that not all students start at the same place with their learning, but every student should learn and grow throughout the school year.
- Growth scores show your child's performance compared to the performance of his or her peers who have performed similarly on past assessments.



TCAP Family Portal

Know More Learn More



On-demand access for families with students in grades 3-8.

The TCAP Family Portal is designed to help families view and understand their child's TCAP scores. Additionally, families can learn how to support their child at home with helpful learning resources.

TCAP Family Portal Log-in Instructions

- 1** Find your child's "unique access code" or "USID" on the bottom right-hand corner of the TCAP score report.
- 2** If you do not have a score report, please contact your school and ask for your child's state ID number.
- 3** Add two zeroes before the seven-digit number to create an account. For example, a state ID 1234567 would become 001234567.

Visit the Family Portal at [KnowMoreLearnMoreTN.tnedu.gov](https://knowmorelearnmoretn.tnedu.gov) to register for the first time or return to your unique page using your child's code.

Log in to find information on your child's performance and use this information to partner with your child's teacher at the beginning of the school year.



Glossary

This glossary contains terms found in **Understanding Student Testing: A Toolkit for Families** from the Tennessee Department of Education.

Academic Standards (TN). A common set of expectations for what students will be taught and be able to do at the end of a grade for each subject area.

Assessment. A test given to determine what your child has learned or if extra support is needed in a certain academic area.

Foundational Literacy Skills. When learning to read, foundational literacy skills are considered the building blocks of reading and include phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension.

Home Literacy Report. A written report provided to a student's family by the district describing the student's progress in foundational literacy skills.

Significant Reading Deficiency. Children who struggle with reading skills may have a reading deficiency. This deficiency may be major or significant. In K-3, a child is considered to have a significant reading deficiency if he or she scores in the 15th percentile or below on a universal reading screener, a test given three times each year. In grades 4-5, a child is considered to have a significant reading deficiency if he or she scored below proficient on the language arts section of their most recent TCAP, a test given at the end of each school year.

Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP). Assessments designed to measure true student understanding, not just basic memorization and test-taking skills. It is a way to assess what our students know and what we can do to help them succeed in the future.

TCAP Family Portal. A site designed to help families understand their child's TCAP score report and provide actionable resources to help their child at home.

Universal Reading Screener. A universal reading screener is an assessment used to screen student performance on grade-level reading skills and tasks compared to same-age peers.

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