



# Missouri Department of Higher Education

## Higher Education Headlines

August 17, 2015

*Note: A link will no longer provide access to some news stories. Those stories appear in their entirety at the end of this document, as indicated.*

High-paying jobs outpacing others in recovery, Aug. 17

Missouri State announces surge in first-time students, Aug. 17

Business notebook: Missouri Lottery gives \$48.8M to education in fiscal year, Aug. 17

Missouri petroleum marketers back 23-cent cigarette tax hike, Aug. 17

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After six-year push, rural Missouri still waits for high-speed internet, Aug. 12

Common Core still generates debate, Aug. 12

Washington University among colleges reporting high crime, Aug. 11

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Missouri releases student test results amid Common Core backlash, Aug. 11

As Missouri releases results of standardized tests, comparisons are difficult to make, Aug. 11  
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Missouri's undocumented college students face higher tuition, loss of scholarships, Aug. 11

Northwest busy making changes, Aug. 6

## As Missouri releases results of standardized tests, comparisons are difficult to make

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The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on Tuesday released the 2015 state results of standardized tests, which showed students performed well in language arts and math but not so well in science.

Though on average 60 percent of the state's elementary and middle school students scored at the top — proficient or advanced — in language arts and about 40 percent did so in math, state education leaders say these scores can't prove progress from the previous year.

"You really cannot make a comparison between these results and last year's results," Education Commissioner Margie Vandeven said during a teleconference before the latest state Missouri Assessment Program results were made public.

That's because the assessments that students took in the spring were new and different from the assessments the spring before, she said.

Moreover, the state tests that elementary and middle school students take in spring 2016 will again be a new set of assessments. That means that when 2016 results roll out, parents and educators will have yet another year without comparable test score data.

It won't be until after the spring of 2017, when new Missouri learning standards are established, that the state might begin collecting measurable assessment data, state education officials said.

By that time, many Missouri public school children will have taken four different state assessment tests in as many years.

On the 2015 tests for elementary and middle school children, only the science standards were unchanged from 2014. This year's test results indicate a dip in the percentage of students scoring in the top two areas. Last year, 48 percent of fifth grade students were proficient or advanced in science. This year, 47 percent did as well. In eighth grade last year, 52.5 percent landed in the top areas in that subject. This year, only 48.9 percent were proficient or advanced.

The tests themselves were not the only change students and teachers dealt with in 2015.

Last spring was the first time Missouri students in grades 3 through 8 took assessments online. High school students have been taking their end-of-course exams on computers since 2010.

On the high school level, this year's end-of-course exams for English and math were optional, and physical science was a new assessment.

But these students did show significant improvement in biology, where 74.3 percent scored in the top two areas, compared with 67 percent last year. High school students showed some progress in American government too, with 63.4 percent at the top levels this year versus 62 percent a year ago.

Included in the state's report were 2014 results for the 26,000 elementary and middle school students who participated in a multistate field testing in which students got a crack at the type of questions that might show up on the next year's MAP exam.

Data released Monday showed the percentage of Missouri students who took the field test and scored on the high end. Those results put roughly 40 percent of students taking the test at each grade level — from third grade to eighth grade — either at the proficient or advanced level in language arts. On average, around 34 percent were in the top levels for math.

Missouri fifth-graders presented the best showing in language arts in both the field testing and the statewide testing: 44 percent of those who took the field test were proficient or advanced, while on the statewide assessment 59 percent of fifth graders scored in the top levels.

Not having scores to compare from one year to the next means schools accumulating test data to show progress that might move them to an improved accreditation status will stay put.

"We can't use these results to lower anyone's accreditation," Vandeven said.

If a district has provisional accreditation, the district keeps it. Kansas City Public Schools is one of those districts. Kansas City regained provisional accreditation last year and would need three years of data to show it has progressed into full accreditation territory.

"We know our academic team has been working hard to prepare students for these tests," said Jon Hile, Kansas City Public Schools board president. "We intend to show our kids are improving."

Vickie Murillo, chief academic officer for the district, said Kansas City will rely heavy on in-district testing given three times a year to "internally monitor progress." But those in-district tests won't affect Kansas City's annual performance status.

Results for standardized assessments for all districts in the state are expected next week.