

- **Standards setting:** Tennessee stakeholders including parents, educators, and community members will review actual test items and recommend the cut scores for each performance level descriptor (formerly below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced) for the assessments.

**16. Do students in grades K-2 take any state assessments?**

- Students in kindergarten and first grade do not take traditional, standardized state assessments.
- The department will offer a new Tennessee-specific optional second-grade assessment. This criterion-referenced assessment is being created in partnership with Tennessee teachers and measures student learning of the Tennessee State Standards for math and ELA.
- The test will be operational this year in spring 2017, and districts choose to participate. The test will be administered via paper and pencil.
- The department will provide additional information regarding practice materials and other opportunities to engage in the development of the second grade assessment.
- There is an Alternative Second Grade Assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
  - The department’s special populations division is developing guidance for IEP teams on determining eligibility for the second grade alternative assessment.

## English Language Arts

**17. How will the ELA test be structured?**

- Students in grades 3–11 will take the ELA test in four subparts. The first subpart will ask students to respond to a text-dependent writing prompt. The other subparts will include multiple item types. All subparts will be administered near the end of the school year.
- Click [here](#) for the testing times chart.

**18. How many writing prompts will my students complete?**

- Students will respond to one writing prompt.

**19. What mode of writing will be tested on the prompt?**

- The prompt could be in any of the three modes of writing (explanatory, argument, or narrative).

**20. How much time will my students have to complete the writing prompt?**

- Students in grades 3–5 will have 75 minutes to respond to the writing prompt in session one of the ELA assessment.
- Students in grades 6–11 will have 85 minutes to respond to the writing prompt in session one of the ELA assessment.

- High school students taking U.S. history will have 50 minutes to respond to the writing prompt in session one of the U.S. history assessment.
- The times to administer the writing prompts are longer than other test subparts so that students will have adequate time to read passages critically and craft a thoughtful essay.

**21. Will subpart one of ELA feature any multiple choice questions along with the writing prompt?**

- Not this year, but we will move to this structure in the future. We believe that multiple-choice questions before the writing prompt will encourage students to closely read the text.
- We are unable to include multiple-choice items in the writing portions of the assessments this year because we can't alter the format of the prompts that we already field tested. However, we will include this new question format in the writing prompts that are field tested this year.

**22. How will writing be scored?**

- The scoring process starts with rangefinding.
- During rangefinding Tennessee educators use the Tennessee writing rubrics to set the cuts at every score level on each trait. The papers used to set the cut scores for each trait are known as anchor papers and are used to train content experts in the scoring process.
- Student responses will then be scored by these scorers using the anchor papers and the Tennessee writing rubrics that have been used previously.

**23. Will there be an ELA writing field test this year?**

- Yes, based on educator feedback, some students will participate in an ELA field test.
- There will be an ELA field test on a writing prompt that will be administered in one subpart separately from the operational test window.
- One-third to one-half of students will need to participate in this field test, and the group of students selected to participate will rotate each year.

**24. What is the ELA assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?**

- Students in grades 3–8 and grade 11 will take the Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) for ELA.
- MSAA will be administered during a two-month window in the spring.
- The test is highly individualized to meet the needs of each student.