The early years of a child’s life lay the foundation for lifelong success. Ensuring opportunity for each and every child’s educational achievement is critical. This begins with quality prenatal care and continues through the early elementary years. With a strong and healthy beginning, children can more easily stay on track to remain in school and graduate on time, pursue postsecondary education and training and successfully transition to adulthood.
While not the only way of measuring students’ abilities, standardized assessments provide a way to examine progress in reading, writing, math and content area courses in order to understand how well schools are preparing students for college and the workforce. Because Delaware has used a variety of assessments during the past 25 years, the ability to examine long-term trends in student achievement is limited.

Currently, Delaware’s main instrument for measuring student learning is the Delaware System of Student Assessment (DeSSA). This system consists of multiple types of state-wide assessments that are administered during and after instruction to inform teachers, schools, districts and the state on measures of student knowledge and skills.

Why Does it Matter?

Student performance on assessments is linked to the likelihood of future, long-term success. Therefore, tracking student performance allows schools and government to pinpoint what student groups need extra support.

Gaps in academic performance between students of different races and ethnicities have persisted for many decades. This achievement gap between white students and students of color indicates limited academic opportunities due to several contributing factors. Across the U.S., black, Hispanic and American Indian or Alaska native students are more likely to be taught by first-year teachers. Children of color are also more likely to live in poverty, a result of long-standing barriers to economic opportunity. Academic achievement gaps between students in low-income families and their classmates in higher-income families have been

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**A Timeline of Delaware’s Statewide Assessments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DSTP</td>
<td>1997/98 - 2009/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCAS</td>
<td>2010/11-2013/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeSSA</td>
<td>2014/15 - current</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading Proficiency by Family Income**

Delaware System of Student Assessments (DeSSA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>Percentage Meeting the Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-Income</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Income</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Source: Delaware Department of Education*
25 Years of Delaware Data: Student Assessment

STUDENT ASSESSMENT TIMELINE

EDUCATIONAL INVOLVEMENT & ACHIEVEMENT

Grade 11 Math Proficiency by Race

Delaware System of Student Assessments (DeSSA) Results

- White: 39.8%
- All Students: 28.3%
- Hispanic: 16.8%
- Black: 12.7%

Percentage of Eleventh Graders Meeting the Standard

School Years: 14/15, 15/16, 16/17, 17/18, 18/19

Source: Delaware Department of Education

Next Steps

Student assessment should be used as both an indicator of student performance and as a tool for improving learning and encouraging growth. Since student assessment identifies disparities in educational achievement, it serves as a vital tool for targeting intervention and allocating resources to decrease inequality.

researched for decades, indicating clear disparities in both opportunities and outcomes.

Mirroring national statistics, state level DeSSA results indicate that white students are achieving at higher rates than black and Hispanic students. Similarly, a smaller percentage of lower-income students are proficient in math and reading compared to their not low-income peers.

In the graphic:

- DSTP
- DCAS
- COMMON CORE
- KINDERGARTEN
- DeSSA

DSTP is designed when a state testing program is legislatively mandated.
DCAS replaces DSTP as new assessment tool.
State Board of Education adopts Common Core State Standards.
Kindergarten readiness tool legislatively established.
DeSSA – aligned with Common Core – replaces DCAS as new assessment tool.

Delaware can utilize assessment data to target resources in order to narrow disparities among student groups.

1997 2009 2010 2012 2014 next
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The photographs in this data snapshot do not necessarily represent the situations described.

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