

# Key Messages

## for Parents & Families

As a parent or caregiver, you are your child's first and most important teacher and can help support your child's learning from home. To do this, families need a clear understanding of how your student(s) and your school are performing.

This is why the Tennessee Department of Education is working hard to equip parents with an accurate picture of your child's progress and also their school. Our goal is to empower families so you can support your child at home. Here are 4 tools we've put in place to help you be the best advocate for your child:

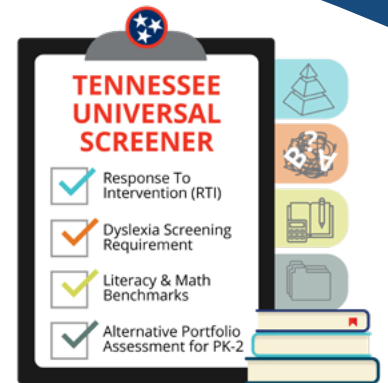
### 1 Updated TCAP Family Portal



- To assist families in getting fast, detailed information about your student's annual TCAP results, the department provides the TCAP Family Portal – a free, on-demand resource caregivers can access via your phone or computer on your schedule.
- The TCAP Family Portal has Personalized Video Reports in five languages: English, Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese, and Mandarin, which provide a quick, easy-to-understand summary of your specific student's test results, areas of strengths, and areas where they may need support in the year ahead, in the language you and your student speak at home.
- The Portal provides information about the types of grade-level questions students see on the TCAP, including:
  - Data from previous years with specific questions and student responses, and an explanation about why a student's answer was correct or incorrect (under the 'Test Questions' tab)
  - Sample questions for every grade level (click "View Sample Questions" on the Personalized Video page)
- The Portal also contains an extra resource for reading, a [Lexile measure](#), so that families can see how your student is progressing toward grade level expectations in things like reading comprehension and language acquisition as well as the "Find a Book" tool, which provides a list of books targeted to your student's unique reading level.
- TCAP provides an individualized summary by skill in all subject areas. For example, in ELA you might see your student excelled at editing text for grammar and needs additional work using relevant text evidence, and a recommended practice would be using informational text to support the main idea (under the 'Test Results' tab).
- This is an opportunity to start a conversation with your student's teacher, asking questions like:
  - What have they noticed about your child's performance in these skills in class?
  - How can we support these skills in school and at home?

## 2 Universal Reading Screener (K-3)

- Research shows how important reading is to student success - not just in school, but in life. That's why Tennessee has made a commitment to ensuring all our students can read by third grade.
- Tennessee requires schools to evaluate students' reading abilities in grades K-3 through a Universal Reading Screener three times per year and send the results home for families to review. The screener helps to identify students who are struggling, as well as what types of supports they need in order to improve their reading.
  - A Universal Reading Screener is a series of short tests that are easy to give and assess key basic reading skills and concepts in three areas.
    - Basic Reading Skills (Can the student identify and make sense of individual written and spoken sounds and words?),
    - Reading Fluency (Can the student read words accurately?), and
    - Reading Comprehension (Can the student understand and make meaning of text?).
- Our investments in early literacy have already led to the largest single year gains last year and the highest 3rd-grade ELA proficiency rates in seven years.
- Tennesseans also have access to our free [Family Reading Resources](#) to help your child practice reading at home.



## 3 School Letter Grades



- School letter grades are similar to student letter grades and give teachers and parents a high-level snapshot based on the school's ability to meet student learning expectations in all tested subjects. No single measure defines a student or a school, but it is an important piece of the puzzle so that parents and community leaders come alongside your school with additional supports. Letter grades are now available for the first time and will be updated each year.
- It is important to ask the principal for more details regarding your school's academic strengths and areas for improvement. A school can be exemplary in one area and need additional focus in another. This is one reason why the department has added letter grades for each component of the overall grade to provide a snapshot in each area.
- Parents and families can play a role in supporting success for your student(s) and your school. It will take everyone working together to ensure that all Tennessee schools are excellent schools.
- For those schools who receive a D or F, this is a call to action – not just for those working in or attending the school, but also for parents and the broader community – that more needs to be done to support the students in this school. Additional resources are available this year to support all schools, but especially those serving students in our low-income communities and those hardest hit by the pandemic.
- Find more information in the [5 Things Parents Should Know About School Letter Grades](#).

## 4

**Improved Report Card Interface**

- Families and community members deserve accessible and clear information about Tennessee schools. The new [State Report Card](#) includes detailed, easy-to-understand information about school and district performance, including achievement, growth, attendance, English learners' proficiency in English, graduation rate, and postsecondary readiness of students.
- The 2022-23 State Report Card has been enhanced to include letter grades and a TISA calculator to demonstrate the new state funding formula designed to address individual student needs.
- The first letter grade release coincides with the first year of a new funding formula for Tennessee schools based on the needs of individual students. The [Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement \(TISA\)](#) provides additional funds to school districts to provide services such as literacy and English language learner support, special education needs, preparation for college and career, and more. Principals will be able to use these funds as they identify improvement strategies for their students.



**The updated report card is just one resource from the department to help families support your students. Here are steps you can take:**

- ▶ Ask the teacher if your child is on grade level in all subjects.
- ▶ Ask the principal about your school's strengths and weaknesses, specific plans for improvement, and ways you can get involved.
- ▶ Access the [TCAP Family Portal](#) to see your child's specific scores and which skills they might need to practice more.



**Check out our [Best for ALL Central](#) hub for resources to support student learning inside and outside the classroom.**