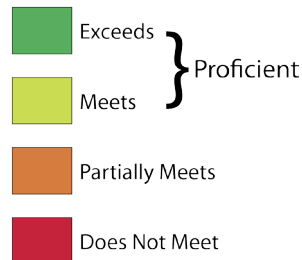


Results of 2019 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs)

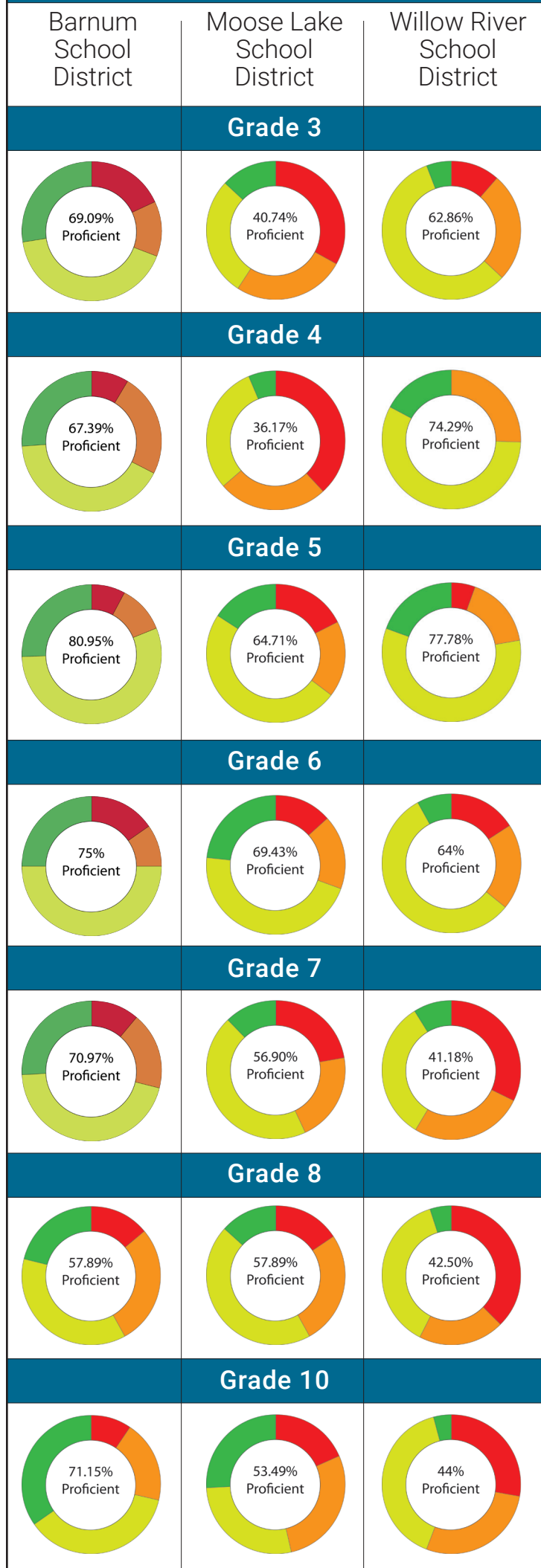
GRAPH LEGEND

On this page, the results of the MCAs are further broken down by test subject, school district, and finally by grade.

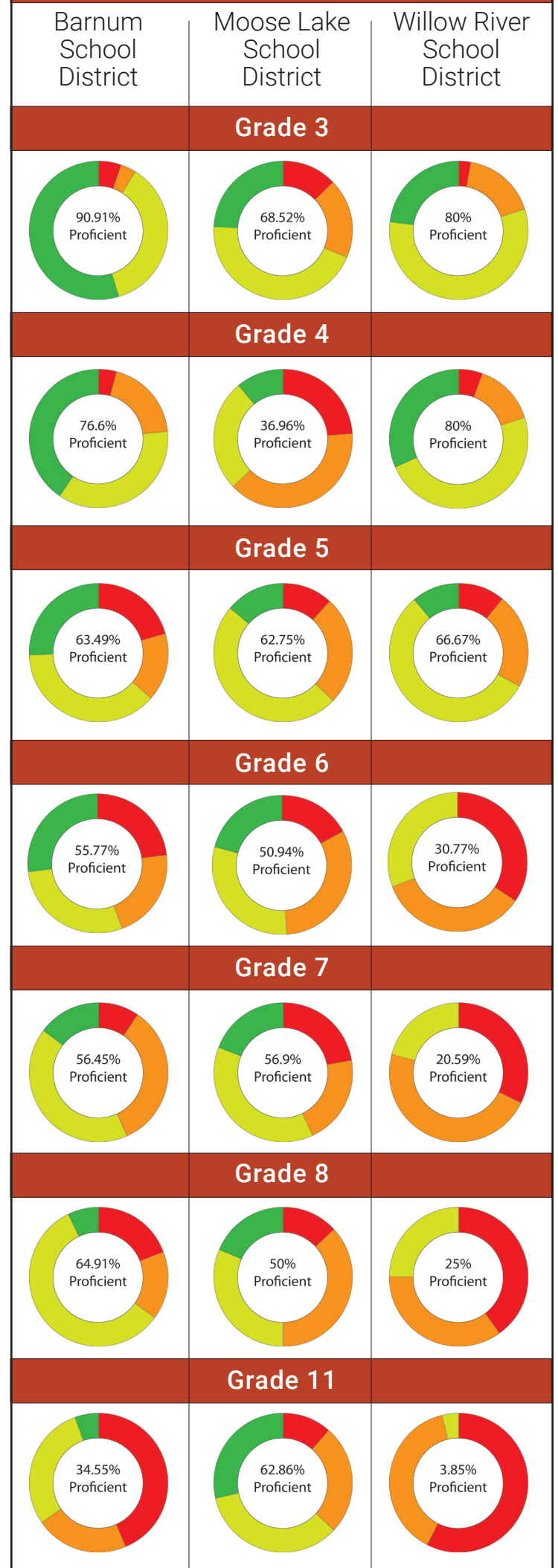


***Data is from the Minnesota Department of Education and is available online at education.mn.gov/MDE/Data/*

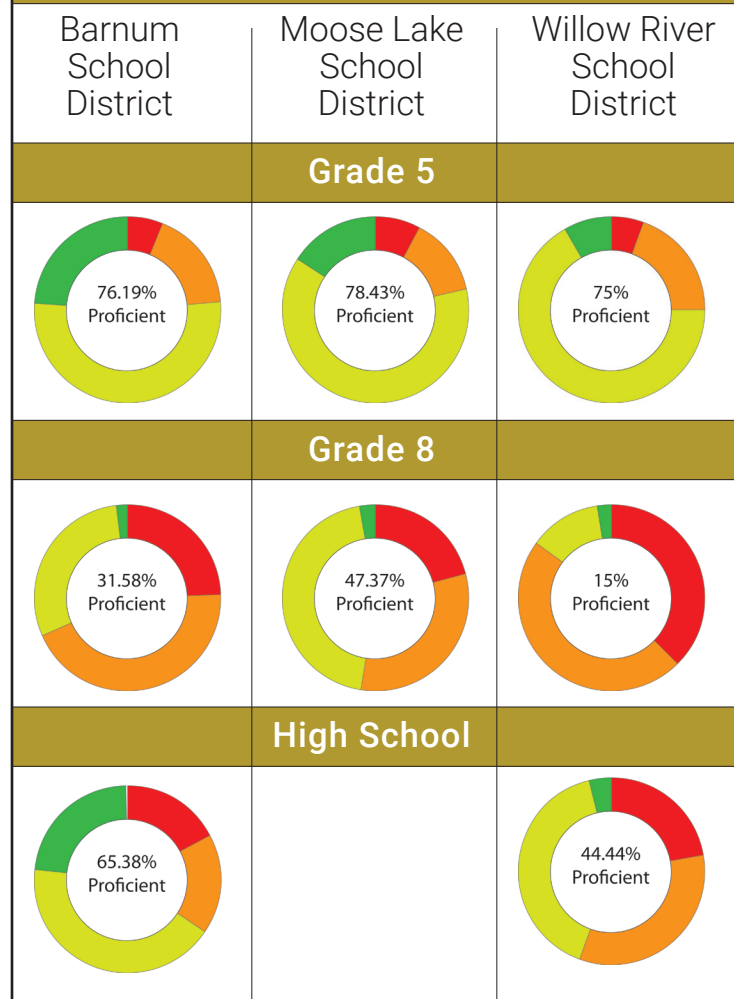
Reading Standards



Math Standards



Science Standards



• 2019 MCA results Continued from page 1.

Each year, specified grades take a MCA test in one of the three categories: grades 3-8 and 11 test in math; grades 3-8 and 11 test in reading; and grades 5, 8, and once in high school test in science.

The use of standardized tests developed in Minnesota during the 1980s-90s as a way to evaluate the progress schools made in the education system. In 1995-96, Minnesota administered the first Minnesota Basic Skills Test for mathematics, reading, and composition.

However, dramatic changes in accountability and assessment requirements came about with the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001. Under the new law, states were required to "generate academic content standards in the core academic areas, measure those standards, and define student proficiency levels—minimum scores that students must obtain on a state assessment in order to be considered academically proficient—in the core subjects," according to a report by the Minnesota Legislature. The MCAs were created in response to this change.

These standardized tests are not only used as a means of measuring progress, but also affect financial aid that schools receive. Beginning in 2013, Minnesota began "literacy incentive aid" which is split into Proficiency Aid and Growth Aid. Under Minnesota Statutes § 124D.98, Proficiency Aid is awarded to schools based on the percentage of 3rd grade students that meet or exceed proficiency levels on the reading MCA. Growth Aid is awarded based on the three-year average number of 4th grade students who make medium or high growth on the 4th grade reading MCA.

However, there are standing criticisms of standardized tests and testing practices. In the Evaluation Report on standardized student testing released by the Office of the Legislative Auditor in 2017, they concluded that many teachers and principals did not feel prepared to interpret the data from the tests. Over half of the principals and teachers who responded to the survey said that they did not feel prepared to analyze the MCA growth scores the Minnesota

Department of Education uses most frequently, and nearly a third of teachers said they did not feel prepared to interpret MCA scores overall.

The auditor's report also went on to say that many educators preferred locally adopted tests as opposed to the state-wide tests. Part of the reasoning is that local tests give educators immediate information to assist them in adjusting classroom instruction, whereas the results of the MCAs aren't released until just before the new school year.

"[The MCA] is taken at the end of the year and when we finally get the scores, the teachers no longer have those kids," the report quoted from a secondary principal the auditor's office interviewed. "This is easily the stupidest part of the MCA. If the data is to be used, we need it immediately. However, the data is not used, because by the time we get it, the kids have moved to another class with another teacher who isn't going to look at the MCA scores because they don't even know the kids' names yet. Useful tests monitor progress continuously and early on so that data can be used to improve instruction."

Locally adopted tests are generally considered more convenient, flexible, comprehensive, and can be repeated throughout the year to better gauge growth.

In the end, what do these tests give in value? The auditor concluded that "though many teachers and principals found the MCAs somewhat useful, most think that they are not as useful as they could be."

"It's autopsy data and it does not really inform our instruction," commented an elementary principal in the auditor's report. "The results are not specific enough to drill down. So a 5th grade student gets a 545, what does that really tell us? MCAs are high stakes for the schools, but not the students."

In the recent Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools (an annual poll on public education that began in 1969), they found that "a nearly unanimous 94% of teachers say the better way to assess a school's quality is to look at the improvement its students show over time, rather than the percentage of students who pass a standardized state test at any given time." ■

A word from the superintendents



Superintendent Bob Indihar
Moose Lake School District

Moose Lake showed improvement over last year in the MCA tests. Our math scores were above state average, the science scores were well above average and our students score above average on the ACT test. On the Minnesota State Survey, our student results show that the students feel safe and supported in our school. While we still need to improve our results on reading, our staff does an excellent job of preparing our students for any future our students may wish to pursue. We are dedicated to every students' success.



Superintendent Mike McNulty
Barnum School District

The Barnum School District people did some great work and these results are just a microcosm of the overall work the students, staff, parents, and administration do here in Barnum to bring a great learning experience for our students in the District. Also, at the Barnum Public Schools, we look to the Minnesota Department of Education for guidance on best practice with assessments. Assessments such as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) play an important role in creating equitable opportunities for our students. The MCA impacts student learning because the educators at Barnum Public Schools work to align learning goals with the Minnesota Academic Standards. In addition to testing, our educators analyze the data in Professional Learning Communities to continually improve outcomes for students. Finally, staff takes action with data by adjusting instruction, planning for student learning, communicating results, and improving outcomes for our students.

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A word from Buddy

I think all students and teachers are amazing! Especially when they stop to give me pets or treats! Ruff!

Love, Buddy