

St. James School -- Standardized Testing

St. James School participates in a number of standardized testing methods as directed by the Diocese.

- ❖ Terra Nova Testing - 2nd through 7th Grades (Spring)
- ❖ High School Placement Test - 8th Grade (December)
- ❖ Assessment Tests - Kindergarten (Twice a Year)

Test results are used by the Administration and Teachers in several ways.

- ❖ To identify areas of strength and weakness in student performance.
- ❖ To provide a report to parents and students.
- ❖ To become aware of students' needs in order to help close gaps in the curriculum.
- ❖ In grades 6-8, the results are used as one of the criteria for placement in Pre-Algebra, Algebra, and Geometry classes.

Explaining Terra Nova Standardized Testing

- ❖ Terra Nova is a norm-referenced nationally standardized achievement test.
- ❖ Nationally standardized means that the test was administered to students across the country at the same time. Norms are also set for the time of year the tests are taken.
- ❖ A statistical sample of students is involved in the norming. This enables the test designers to establish appropriate percentile scales (norms) indicating how well students of a particular age and grade perform on the test items.
- ❖ Terra Nova is an achievement test, not a proficiency test such as the state administers. Proficiency tests are those in which students have been taught all the content and are now being tested on whether or not they "got" it. Achievement tests include content that students have been taught and include content students may not have been specifically taught, but that they could be expected to have mastered according to their cognitive ability.

Understanding Terra Nova Percentiles

What about those national percentile scores? Aren't scores around 60 pretty bad?

- ❖ Percentiles are NOT percentages! A percentile score of 60 does not mean that the child got 60 right out of 100, that would be a percentage.
- ❖ Percentiles are rank order scores, indicating that, in a national group of 100 children in the same grade, this child is doing better than 59 of them. By definition, the median (average middle score) percentile is 50. "Average" scores follow a bell-shaped curve, with most students falling between the 25th (low average) and 75th (high average) percentiles.
- ❖ If a student scores in 58th percentile in math, he/she is achieving according to his ability (perhaps a bit higher than the average of his ability group), and is doing better than 57 out of 100 of his peers across the country.

So What Does the Test Tell Me About A Child's Learning?

- ❖ The Terra Nova (achievement) scores indicate how well the child is doing in relation to students across the country.
- ❖ It is important to remember that standardized test scores represent achievement in particular areas at one particular time and must be reviewed together with the student's actual classroom work and other factors. The information gathered from this testing is only one of the many variables that contribute to improved learning.
- ❖ There is no student ranking from Terra Nova testing only percentile scores which are normed against national results.