

CDE Foundation

Talking Points for the New Assessments Aligned with the California Standards

A Comprehensive Plan for Student Success

Our state needs a school system that prepares California's next generation of innovators and leaders. To continue preparing for the future, California is undergoing an ambitious remodeling of our education system.

With updated standards that add new skills to the traditional curriculum, more decision-making in the hands of local schools and communities, and more resources dedicated to schools that have students with the greatest needs, our work is well underway. We're also developing a fair and consistent approach for ensuring that our schools are meeting the needs of all our students and communities.

If we want this update to work well in the incredible diversity of learning environments we have across the state, the master craftspeople in this remodeling project have to be the people closest to the work – teachers and the local district administrators who support them. Gradually, we're also providing more support for teachers and more access to technology.

Exciting changes have begun to take place for students inside our classrooms. Along with learning to read stories, students are learning to use what they read to provide examples, draw logical conclusions, and write strong arguments - which builds the kinds of thinking skills needed in today's information age.

They are learning math in a way lets them understand how numbers work, rather than just following steps without knowing why. This builds the ability to use math to solve both simple and complex problems – which is one of the skills most important in modern careers.

Statewide, our curriculum is being upgraded to focus on helping all students reach their potential, graduating ready to handle college-level studies and with the skills needed for 21st-century careers. Like any successful remodeling project, this work will take considerable time and effort to carry out.

That's why the course we've set for California is a step-by-step, methodical approach to these changes, which will take shape as the state and local districts continue to develop capacity to implement these changes.

New Assessments Help Schools Support Many Different Types of Learners

One of the most important goals for our education system is to develop each child's talents, so that a diverse set of skills is available to our state. To know students well and adjust instruction to meet their needs and interests, teachers need to use assessments of many kinds and at many points.

A strong assessment system doesn't take a one-size-fits-all approach by relying on a single test. Rather, it works more like the kind of assessment we all use when we drive –using the windows and mirrors to continuously observe and quickly adjust when needed.

Updated Standards Require Different Ways to Measure Improvement

As part of the overall changes to California's education system, we are moving toward a "dashboard" approach to measure what students are learning. Consulting a whole dashboard of gauges offers specific kinds of information.

On our dashboard, the statewide tests are something like the odometer, letting us know how far we have gone over a long period of time, and reminding us to check on how well everything is functioning.

Because the things we want students to know and be able to do have changed, the year-end assessment must change as well. This spring, students in grades three through eight and grade eleven are taking part in California's new statewide assessments in English language arts/literacy (ELA) and math.

Another part of the update is that the state is moving away from paper-based, multiple-choice assessments tests and implementing computer-based tests that can adapt questions to different student needs. The use of computer adaptive technology will provide teachers with much more detailed, accurate information individual student performance – which in turn, means that schools and teachers can better tailor their lessons for different students.

And because the assessments tests are taken online, they can be scored much faster – which means that information will be available to school districts in time to let teachers consider it in planning what they'll teach.

We're Making Progress – But We're Not Quite Ready

This major renovation of our school system is still ongoing – and for a while, the "under construction" signs will be visible. It's important to remember that California schools are still transitioning to the updated standards.

California teachers are very familiar with using standards to plan their curriculum, but these standards are different and teachers are still adjusting to them. New textbooks and materials are still arriving at local schools.

The new assessments are checking on student progress toward the updated learning goals, which are asking students to learn more deeply and to apply what they know. Just like it takes a while to get used to a newly remodeled kitchen, our students will be getting used to these tests.

And, let's remember, we adopted the new standards and the matching assessments because they required a shift to the more complex skills that today's colleges and careers require. The trial run of some test questions in California and other states suggest that the first set of scores will probably show what we already know: we have a ways to go in developing the skills needed for the 21st century.

That's why this year's scores are better thought of as a starting point, rather than as an end result and can't be compared to previous years' results. This year's scores will establish a

new baseline, marking where California's education system is on the path towards its goal of ensuring that our future workforce is prepared for the economy of tomorrow.

Because California is also remodeling our system of measuring if our schools are meeting the needs of students—to make it more thoughtful and meaningful - and because they are likely to have both pleasant surprises and some disappointments, it's important for us all to be informed about how these scores will and won't be used. Results from the tests are just one indicator on the dashboard – a small piece of how we will measure students' academic improvement or a schools' overall performance over time.

It is important to note that scores will not be used to determine whether a student moves on to the next grade. Rather, the results will provide information that helps to focus on the needs of students and support teachers and schools in their work. Taking a levelheaded, objective approach to the results will help us know what's working and what still needs to be improved.

Patience and Persistence

California's new assessment system represents the next step in our comprehensive plan to remodel our education system to promote high-quality teaching and learning and improve student outcomes. In any project, it's important to check on progress from time to time – and this is the role that the statewide assessments play in supporting our overall goals.

Teachers in California support these changes because, unlike in other states, the primary purpose of the assessments here is to support learning, not to impose high-stakes consequences. This approach fits well with California's new system for funding our schools, which recognizes that decisions about education dollars are best made locally and need to include parents, teachers, and community members.

California's most valuable resource is its people. As a diverse and complex state, our schools can develop an agile, capable workforce with a wide range of skills to fuel our economy and move our state forward.

Adjustments will always be needed to make lasting progress. Patience and persistence will be required to help our schools continue to succeed during this time of transition. Together, we will foster the skills and talents to prepare our children for the workforce demands of the 21st century.

The New Assessments Aligned with the California Standards



A Guide for Parents and Community Members

This Brochure Provided by:



California County Superintendents
Educational Services Association

www.ccsesa.org



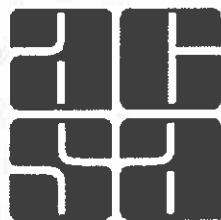
www.csba.org

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www.capta.org



www.cta.org



association of california
school administrators

www.acsa.org

A Comprehensive Plan for Student Success

How do the new assessments support different types of learners?

California's most valuable resource is its people. As a diverse and complex state, one of the most important goals for our schools is to develop our children's talents into a wide range of skills to fuel our economy and move our state forward. To know how to adjust instruction and meet all of our students' needs and interests, teachers need to use assessments of many kinds and at many points of time.

A strong assessment system doesn't take a one-size-fits-all approach by relying on a single test. Rather, it works more like consulting a car's windows and mirrors while driving, to continuously observe and quickly adjust when needed.

How are our schools progressing with these updated standards?

Like any successful remodeling project, this major renovation of our school system is still ongoing and the "under construction" signs will be visible for a while. It's important to remember that California schools are still transitioning to the updated standards, which required a shift to the more complex skills that today's colleges and careers expect. New textbooks and materials are just now being approved and are still arriving at local schools.



A Comprehensive Plan for Student Success

How do the new assessments fit into the “remodeling project”?

The new assessments are checking on student progress toward the updated learning goals. Just like it takes a while to get used to a newly remodeled kitchen, our students will be getting used to these assessments. The trial run of some test questions in California suggest that the first set of scores will probably show that we have a ways to go in developing the skills needed in the 21st century.

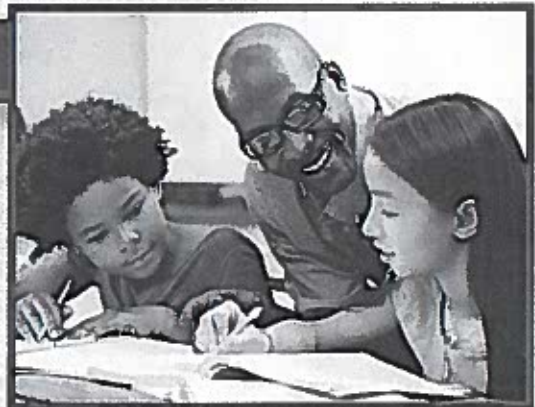
This year’s scores should be thought of as a new baseline and can’t be compared to previous years’ results. They will mark where our state’s education system is on the path towards its goal of ensuring that our future workforce is prepared for the economy of tomorrow.

How will these scores be used?

To go along with our updated standards, California is moving toward a “dashboard” approach to how we measure what students are learning. On our whole dashboard of gauges that offer specific kinds of information, statewide tests are like the odometer, letting us know how far we have gone over a long period of time.

The results are just one indicator on the dashboard of how we will measure students’ academic improvement. Scores will not be used to determine whether a student moves on to the next grade. Rather, the scores will provide information to help focus on students’ needs and support teachers in their work and, beginning in 2016, allow schools to monitor a student’s academic growth as they move from one grade to another.

As adjustments are needed, patience and persistence will be required to help our schools continue to succeed during this transition. Together we can prepare our children for the demands of the 21st century, fostering an agile and capable workforce ready to tackle the future’s challenges.



Glossary of Terms

California Standards: California's K-12 public education standards, designed to help prepare students to succeed in college and careers. These standards include the voluntarily adopted, updated standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and math.

California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP): The umbrella term for California's assessment system. Among others, these include the Smarter Balanced Assessments.

Smarter Balanced Assessment System: Specific to the ELA and math standards, Smarter Balanced uses computer-adaptive tests and performance tasks that allow students to show what they know and are able to do. Smarter Balanced has three assessment components designed to support teaching and learning throughout the year: Formative, Interim, and Summative.

Formative Assessment (Digital Library): These are tools and practices for teachers, found in an online resource called the Digital Library, to help them improve classroom instruction.



Interim Assessments: Designed to provide actionable feedback for teachers to improve classroom learning, these are optional assessments for teachers to use to track students' mastery of the ELA and math standards in all grade levels.

Summative Assessment: Administered in grades three through eight and eleven, these assessments check if a student is meeting the ELA and math standards and are on track for college and career readiness. This assessment is just one part of the CAASPP system. The Summative Assessment has two parts: the computer adaptive test and the performance tasks.

Glossary of Terms (Cont.)

Computer Adaptive Tests: As the student takes the Summative Assessments, the computer program adjusts the difficulty of questions based on the student's responses. By doing this, teachers and parents can get a better understanding of what ELA and math skills students have mastered and what skills need improvement in order to be prepared for success at college and in careers.

Performance Task: A part of the Summative Assessments, the performance tasks ask students to use the information provided through readings, video clips, data, etc., to construct a response to a question or problem.

This extended activity allows a teacher to measure a student's ability to integrate knowledge and skills, an important component of college- and career-readiness.

Student Score Report: An individualized report mailed to the parents of students who took the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment. There will be two scores, one for ELA and one for math, and they are just one indicator of how the student is improving their mastery of the ELA and math standards over time. The scores will not be used to determine whether a student moves on to the next grade level.



Helpful Links

www.capta.org/assessments

www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/index.asp

smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/