

The New Assessments Aligned with the California Standards



A Guide for Parents and Community Members

This Brochure Provided by:



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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/