A RESOURCE FOR EDUCATORS AND PARENTS

The Role of State Assessments in Increasing Academic Achievement

COLORADO
Department of Education

Colorado has a series of educational standards known as the Colorado Academic Standards that outline academic objectives for students in every grade across 12 content areas, including math, English language arts and science. The standards create learning expectations for what students should understand, know and be able to do at each grade level and in each content area. The end-of-year assessments – Colorado Measures of Academic Success, or CMAS – measure students' mastery of the standards and the complex thinking and other critical skills students need to be successful in school and in life. The data from assessments are critical in determining if educational goals are being met and if students are on track to graduate prepared for college and careers.

Additionally, multilingual learners in the third and fourth grade may take a form of CMAS in the Spanish language called the Colorado Spanish Language Arts assessment.

Purpose and value of state assessments

CMAS and PSAT/SAT are the only common measuring tools for Colorado students. The tests measure real-world skills like problem-solving and critical thinking and are aligned to classroom work, so teachers don't have to "teach to the test." Instruction based on the standards is the best preparation.

While state assessments are only one measure of student learning, having all Colorado students take this set of assessments gives parents important insights.

DID YOU KNOW?

Federal and state laws require the administration of statewide tests in certain grades and subjects. All students in these grades take state tests.

Not too long ago, some students were not included in testing. Back then, students with disabilities and multilingual learners were often excluded.

By requiring all students to take the same test, schools and teachers can think about all students when they are planning.

How will results from the CMAS assessments help my child:

- CMAS results provide information that shows what your child has been learning and practicing in their classroom, and how well they are connecting with classroom instruction.
- CMAS results for your whole school let you know how well your school is teaching all students.
- Results provide you and other families in your community with information about how local schools are meeting the needs of all students.
- The results let you check your child's progress toward completing high school ready for a career or college.

How does taking state tests help my child's school?

- Taking the test provides critical information to the district and state on how well all students in your child's school are doing, so the school can be supported.
- Test results allow teachers and principals to see any differences between groups of students and make improvements to instruction, so that all students can succeed.
- The results highlight gaps in achievement, so steps can be taken to ensure all students are supported in making meaningful progress.
- The results help state policymakers and local school boards identify schools that may need more assistance or resources.

DID YOU KNOW?

State tests provide information about how all students are doing to help schools improve instruction for you and other students.



Statewide testing is meant to show how schools are doing, so they can better meet the needs of all students.

Statewide testing helps identify if some groups of students are not getting the instruction they need, so that changes can be made that will improve learning for them.

How can I support my child?

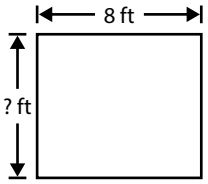
- Talk with your child and make sure they understand why they are taking state tests.
- Talk to your child's teacher about any accessibility needs to see if there are supports or accommodations that might help your child access instruction and state tests.
- Use positive language about testing and help your child use positive self-talk such as, "I can do my best," "mistakes are okay," etc.
- Practice stress-reducing strategies such as breathing exercises and stretching with your child.
- Talk about testing as a regular part of learning and share your experiences with testing in school.

Practice questions help students be ready

Parents are sometimes concerned that participating in these tests can cause anxiety in their child or that preparing for the tests takes away time from instruction. Because these tests are aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards and classroom instruction, they should not cause any more anxiety than any other tests students take. Also, practice questions are available to help familiarize parents and students with test content and structure.

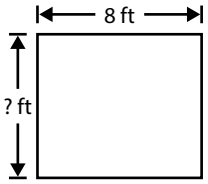
Here is an example of a CMAS Fourth Grade Math item in both English and Spanish:

The length of a rectangular room is 8 feet.
The area of the room is 56 square feet.



What is the perimeter, in feet, of the room?
Enter your answer in the box.

Un cuarto rectagular mide 8 pies de largo.
El cuarto tiene un área de 56 pies cuatrados.



¿Quánto mide el perímetro del cuarto, en pies?
Escribe tu respuesta en el recuadro.

View practice questions

Practice resources include sets of question by content area and grade level in online and paper formats and in English and Spanish. A scoring guide that includes answers, sample student responses, and scoring rubrics is available with each practice resource. Visit https://coassessments.com/practice-tests/.

Parental excuse from participation

State law allows parents to excuse their children from taking state assessments. If a parent wants to excuse their child from participating in an assessment, the district is not allowed to impose negative consequences on the students or parents including prohibiting school attendance, imposing an unexcused absence, or prohibiting participation in extracurricular activities.

Likewise, districts cannot impose unreasonable burdens or requirements on a student to discourage the student from taking an assessment or to encourage the student's parent to excuse their child from the assessment. They must offer all students who are excused from testing the opportunity to participate in celebrations or incentives related to the assessments. Parents should know, however, that non-participation in state assessments means they will not have information on their child's attainment and growth on the state standards compared to other children.



DATA SECURITY

CDE is committed to ensuring that data on individual students are secure. The department has strict policies and procedures in place to maintain data security. For more information on data privacy and security, please go to http:// www.cde.state.co.us/dataprivacyandsecurity.

LEARN MORE

Thanks to the National Center on Educational Outcomes for the research and messaging used in this document.