



# 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 grades who are identified as Non English Proficient (NEP) or Limited English Proficient (LEP) may take the Colorado Spanish Language Arts assessment in place of the English 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?

The United States passed a federal law in 2015 that requires all states to administer 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 state assessments help my child?

- 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.
- 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 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 that can help schools improve instruction for your child and for other students in Colorado.



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

State testing helps identify if some groups of students are not getting the instruction they need, so 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.

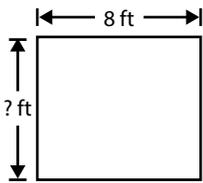
### Practice items help students be ready

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 items are available to help familiarize parents and students with test content and structure.

Colorado practice resources are publicly available at <https://coassessments.com/practice-resources/> to help familiarize students, educators, and the public with the CMAS assessments.

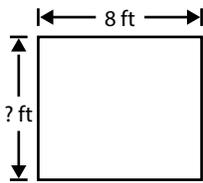
### Here is an example of a CMAS Fourth Grade Math item in both English and Spanish:

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 rectangular mide 8 pies de largo.  
El cuarto tiene un área de 56 pies cuadrados.



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



## Parental excuse from participation

State law allows parents to excuse their children from taking state assessments. If a parent wants to excuse his or her 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 his/her 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](http://www.cde.state.co.us/dataprivacyandsecurity).

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Thanks to the [National Center on Educational Outcomes](#) for the research and messaging used in this document.