



Background

The Colorado Measures of Academic Success program, CMAS, is one component of a comprehensive assessment system. In addition to these required assessments, Colorado teachers, schools and districts develop and/or select their own assessments to guide a variety of actions including in-the-moment instructional feedback to students and decisions related to resource acquisition. The need to balance the collection of assessment information for various accountability purposes with that of the need to embed and use high quality assessment practices during the instructional process requires a comprehensive assessment system that aims to inform and take action in service of student learning.

What is a Comprehensive Assessment System?

A comprehensive assessment system includes different types of assessment, aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards, to provide the information educators at different levels of the system and other stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, and policymakers) need to make decisions and fulfill their responsibilities in support of student learning. In a comprehensive assessment system, there is a place for different types of assessment tools and processes, used for different purposes at different levels of the system: national, state, district, school, and classroom. It is important to note that along this assessment continuum, each assessment can contribute unique types of information to the collective understanding of what students know and can do, such that no one assessment will be expected to yield evidence it was not designed to collect.



Designing a Comprehensive Local Assessment System

Establishing a comprehensive local assessment system allows stakeholders to understand and appropriately use all assessment information for their intended purpose. Because each assessment serves a particular, actionable purpose, redundancies and over-testing can be decreased while increasing alignment among and between assessments that reflect the full-range of expectations in the Colorado Academic Standards. In WestEd's 2016 publication [Designing a Comprehensive Assessment System](#), six recommendations are provided for designing a comprehensive assessment system:

- Develop a conceptual framework that can be used to build common understanding of the comprehensive assessment system;
- Engage stakeholders in establishing principles that guide the design process;



- Identify and weigh the information needs of a wide range of stakeholders;
- Keep stakeholders informed about the assessment system design;
- Consider contextual information and remember: one size does not fit all;
- Take stock: conduct an inventory of all measures in the current assessment system. What are the benefits/values of each assessment compared to the burdens/costs?

Colorado Comprehensive Standards-based Assessment System Framework

Like that which is suggest in the above recommendations, CDE has created an [assessment system framework](#) which describes the functions, components and processes included in a quality, comprehensive local assessment system. The Framework is structured to represent the continuum-nature of an assessment system and the attributes these assessments possess. When local policymakers, district and school leaders, and teachers are able to consider together all assessments in their local system in this way, decisions can be made around when and why assessments are used and the actions that will be taken with the results, thereby streamlining the assessment process in order to have a greater impact on student learning.

Framework Components

Type and User	Purpose	Frequency and Relationship to Instruction	Methods	Information	Uses/Actions
Category of assessment and who uses the assessment type and results	Function assessment serves within a comprehensive system of standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment	How often and when to assess students in relation to instructional goals	Strategies for obtaining evidence of learning	Types of evidence or information gained from assessment to inform uses and actions (see next column)	Actions that educators and students might take in relation to assessment Information

Example Assessment Type from Framework

Classroom Summative (Student, Teacher, Student Support Staff, School Administrator, Family, District Administrator)	Signal important learning goals Evaluate attainment of important learning goals	After a more extended period of teaching and learning (e.g., after a unit is completed and before another unit begins) Medium-term goals	Student work products and performances (e.g., portfolio), with associated rubric(s) Student self-reflection (e.g., short survey) Classroom summative assessments designed/selected by teacher(s)	Status of student learning relative to longer-term goals (e.g., unit learning goals)	Reflect on subsequent next steps moving forward (S, T, SSS) Reflect on effectiveness of planning and instruction (T, SSS) Report to administrators and families (T, SSS, F) Discuss student progress as a basis for instructional planning of subsequent units during teacher grade level/ departmental meetings (T, SSS, SA) Family involvement based on results (F) Refine and improve assessment (T, SSS, SA) May be used as a portion of a comprehensive educator evaluation system (T, SSS)
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Users: S=Student, T=Teacher, SSS=Student Support Staff, SA=School Administrator, F=Family, D=District Administrator, ST=State

Additional Resources

- [Colorado Assessment Literacy Program](#) (includes assessment framework above)
- [Designing a Comprehensive Assessment System](#) (WestEd 2017)
- [Comprehensive Standards-based Assessment Systems Supporting Learning](#) (Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation, 2016)
- [Setting the Stage for Formative Assessment Webinars](#) (Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation, 2018)