

Considerations for Spring 2021 CMAS Administration

Including Special Considerations for Assessing Remote Learners



COLORADO
Department of Education

CMAS testing should be conducted if and when state and local health guidelines, as well as district policies and practices for COVID-19 allow students and staff to be in school buildings. All processes must follow health orders for gathering safely.

Purpose of the CMAS Assessments

CMAS assessments provide valuable information for students, parents, districts, taxpayers and policy makers about how well students are meeting Colorado's grade-level academic expectations. Through a staggering health crisis and incredible disruptions to learning environments and experiences for many students, schools and districts, Colorado educators have made every effort to provide students with the best education possible during the 2020-2021 school year. Spring 2021 state assessment results are expected to look different than results from previous years for many students because of the unique, challenging and differential impacts of the pandemic; however, CMAS results are intended to support educators, schools and districts. Spring 2021 CMAS results are not expected to be used in teacher evaluations or included in the performance frameworks if legislation pausing the state accountability system for a second year is passed and signed into law.

Having statewide data will provide insight into the educational achievement of Colorado students during the pandemic.

- The assessments will provide information to parents about their students' learning this year.
- Spring 2021 CMAS data can help provide a baseline for measuring the differential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and inform allocation of federal, state and local resources and supports students need.
- In combination with local information, districts can use CMAS data to evaluate the magnitude of recovery efforts needed and identify where adjustments to curricula, scope-and-sequence, and instructional approaches should be made for the 2021-2022 school year.
- These data will support the evaluation of future recovery efforts with an eye to potential differential impact across Colorado student groups. Without sufficient data this year, it will be difficult to separate performance issues influenced by the pandemic from those influenced by recovery efforts.
- It is exceedingly unlikely that growth data will be provided in SY22 for students without 2021 scores.

The tests can continue to help students, families and educators know how students are performing compared to their peers within the school and district and across the state. The state assessments also provide information on how well the state's education system is meeting the goals of helping every child attain academic proficiency.

Purpose of this document This document is a supplemental guide to help districts plan for safely administering the 2021 CMAS assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Use this information in addition to the *Spring 2021 CMAS and CoAlt Procedures Manual*, *Spring 2021 CMAS Test Administrator Manuals*, and CMAS training resources to help draft a plan for this year's test administration. ***This document does not provide medical advice and does not replace or amend any guidance provided by your local health department or district.***

In-person testing: Remote testing will not be available in spring 2021. CDE consulted with state and national technical advisors, took into consideration concerns from the field, and collaborated with the CMAS assessment contractor regarding remote administration possibilities. It was determined that remote CMAS administrations this spring would introduce considerable challenges including lack of equitable access to internet and devices across the state, increased burden for parents, schools and districts, student privacy concerns, and technical issues regarding the comparability of results across administration environments. Therefore, CMAS will only be administered in-person.



Making a Good Faith Effort to Administer the State Content Assessments

The state content assessments are administered consistent with both state (C.R.S. § 22-7-1006.3) and federal (ESSA, Title I, Part A § 1111(b)(2)(B)(v)) law. Schools and districts are encouraged to continue to prepare for CMAS testing this spring and to make good faith efforts to administer CMAS assessments so the results may contribute to parent, educator, policymaker and stakeholder understanding of the pandemic’s *statewide* impact on student learning.

On February 22, the [U.S. Department of Education \(USDOE\) provided an update on assessment, accountability, and reporting requirements for the 2020-2021 school year](#). The guidance reiterates the importance of parents, educators and the public having access to data on student learning. The USDOE is not inviting “blanket” assessment waivers. The federal government indicated a willingness to work with states to address individual needs and conditions while “ensuring the maximum available statewide data to inform the targeting of resources and supports.”

The guidance indicated that if there are places where it is not possible for students to attend school safely in person, students should not be brought into those school buildings solely to test. This is consistent with CDE’s position that testing should only occur when health and safety conditions allow. In addition, parents’ decisions to excuse their children from testing must be respected.

CDE will continue to monitor the status of state legislation and explore the invitation to submit an accountability waiver from the federal department of education.

House bill (HB 21-1161), calling for the suspension of required statewide assessments for selected grade levels for the 2020-2021 school year, was introduced on March 3. If suspended, the ELA and math assessments would still be available as a parent opt-in option. The proposed bill directs the Department to submit a federal waiver seeking the following testing schedule for spring 2021:

| GRADE | REQUIRED ADMINISTRATION (except for students with parent excuse) | REQUIRED ADMINISTRATION OPPORTUNITY (with parental opt-in) |
|-------|---|--|
| 3 | ELA (CMAS and CoAlt) | MATH (CMAS and CoAlt) |
| 4* | MATH (CMAS and CoAlt) | ELA (CMAS and CoAlt) |
| 5** | ELA (CMAS and CoAlt) | MATH (CMAS and CoAlt) |
| 6 | MATH (CMAS and CoAlt) | ELA (CMAS and CoAlt) |
| 7* | ELA (CMAS and CoAlt) | MATH (CMAS and CoAlt) |
| 8** | MATH (CMAS and CoAlt) | ELA (CMAS and CoAlt) |
| 9 | PSAT | |
| 10 | PSAT | |
| 11** | SAT | |

*CMAS and CoAlt Social Studies will not be administered in grades 4 and 7. A federal waiver is not required.

**If the waiver is approved, CMAS and CoAlt Science will not be administered in grades 5, 8 and 11.

For now, districts and schools should continue to plan for the administration of all CMAS and CoAlt assessments. If possible, districts may want to consider starting with the assessments that will continue to be required if the waiver is approved (the assessments included in the REQUIRED ADMINISTRATION (except for students with parent excuse column)).

Parent Excusals

While local education providers are responsible for developing their parent excusal policies, please keep in mind that statute prohibits school districts from imposing “an unreasonable burden or requirement on a student that would discourage the student from taking a state assessment.” § 22-7-1013(8)(c), C.R.S. We believe an “opt in” requirement for state assessment participation would be such a burden. This practice is especially concerning if applied to students receiving in-person instruction. Likewise, districts may not “encourage the student’s parent to excuse the student from taking the state assessment.” *Id.*

Students Receiving In-person Instruction

Districts/schools should be planning to assess their students who are receiving in-person instruction, within state and local health and safety protocols. Consistent with state statute requirements, the assumption is that in-person students will test, with the exception of students whose parents have notified the district/school that they are excusing their student(s) from testing. In-person students with parent excusals should be coded as *Parent Excuse* in demographic data.

Students Receiving Remote Instruction

Parents who have chosen remote learning for the year have *already* indicated to some extent that they do not want their children in school buildings. Districts may assume, based on their precise local circumstances, whether these parents have essentially indicated a desire to excuse their students from all in-person activities, including assessment. While some traditional in-person activities are provided remotely, state testing cannot be. Districts should nonetheless offer parents of remote learners an opportunity for their students to take the assessments and they must provide a safe opportunity to do so. Students whose parents have chosen remote learning due to COVID and do not choose to send their students in to test should be coded as *COVID* (State Use 11) in demographic data.

We understand that districts and families face unique challenges this year. However, the assessment of Colorado students remains a requirement of both state and federal law. Recent guidance from the U.S. Department of Education reaffirms their stance on the importance of assessment and providing shared state-wide data.

Extended Test Window

CDE extended the CMAS testing window for spring 2021 to provide Colorado districts and schools with additional flexibility as they prepare for this year’s test administration. Taking into consideration district closing dates for the 2020-2021 school year, the CMAS testing window is currently expected to open on April 12, 2021 (the early window opens on March 22) and close on Friday, May 14, 2021; however, any scheduled start dates may change due to local health conditions. CDE will work with district assessment coordinators to potentially further extend the window if individual districts determine that additional time for testing would be helpful.

Recognizing the unique challenges to this year’s administration as schools continue to implement district policies and local health guidelines, districts can choose to use this additional time in a variety of ways:

- They can delay the start of testing. This may allow some schools/districts to increase the number of in-person instructional days prior to testing.
- They can extend testing to address the unique challenges to this year’s administration
 - To allow for smaller testing groups due to group size restrictions
 - To allow for cohort testing for students who may be on alternating day in-person schedules

- To address limited availability of test administrators
- To increase time between sessions to ensure sanitization of test materials and environment as needed
- To lower daily use of technology for testing to address technology capacity issues

Based on the extension of the CMAS administration window to May 14, 2021, the additional secure materials order window is scheduled to close on **May 11, 2021**. The scorable materials return deadline is now **May 19, 2021**; the nonscorable materials return deadline is now **May 21, 2021**. Given the many variables and unknowns, CDE encourages districts to return completed paper materials within three days of their individual district's completion.

Revised dates for the Student Biographical Data (SBD) validation window and receipt of results will be determined and announced when they become available. ***Additional adjustments may be announced as the department continues to monitor state and federal assessment requirements and the effect of the current public health situation on districts and schools.***

Scheduling

CMAS 2021 testing schedules may differ from previous years to address COVID-19 conditions. Testing should be coordinated through the district assessment coordinator and the assessment must be given at a district-approved testing site. Security of testing materials must be maintained with a documented chain of custody. Be sure to implement district policies and practices as well as state and local health guidelines when working with cohorts of students, determining group sizes within test sessions, and limited availability of test administrators. As always, be sure all students can hear the test administrator during testing.

- When identifying testing rooms, consider the number of students who can be tested safely at the same time.
 - Reference the *Unit Testing Times and Testing Multiple Groups* resource for information on which grades and content areas can be tested together (http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas_utt_tmg).
- When creating a testing schedule, determine whether students will complete one unit a day or more than one. Provide assessment administration flexibility where needed in terms of multiple sessions administered in a single day, if taking multiple sessions is developmentally appropriate for students.
 - If completing more than one unit in a day, determine how breaks will be scheduled.
 - **Prioritize completing English language arts and math assessments before administering science assessments.**
- Schedule time between test sessions for different students to allow for sanitizing materials, equipment, and other touched surfaces.
- Test schedules should include considerations for make-up testing and contingencies in case of building closures.

Unique Scheduling Considerations for Remote Learners

- Identify any unique considerations that may be made for remote learner scheduling, including those that may apply to neighborhood or home schools, grade level, family structure, or accommodation type (e.g., IEP extended-time, scribe, etc.)
- Consider using spaces that are not currently being used as classrooms (potentially libraries, gyms, cafeterias, administrative buildings, etc.)
- Consider testing at times that differ from students receiving in-person instruction (e.g., time of day, day of the week (using the 5th day in 4-day school weeks or Saturdays), etc.)
- Identify district guidance or policies around special circumstances, including whether families will have an opportunity to select their testing times/locations and whether testing may be available outside of regular school hours. **Note:** Test administration practices as specified in the *Procedures Manual* and *Test Administrator Manuals* still need to be followed.

- Determine where students who arrive early at testing locations will wait. Also consider what directions will be provided to parents/guardians who want to wait on-site for their students.
- Test schedules may include considerations for make-up testing and contingencies in case of building closures.

Test Administrators

Districts should identify CMAS test administrators before the test window begins. If additional adults are available, increasing the number of people trained to administer CMAS may help with flexible scheduling needs.

Communicating Test Information to Families

The CMAS administration communication plan should address helping families understand the purpose of the test, testing expectations, locations, dates, and times. This plan may need to be augmented for students who are receiving instruction remotely due to COVID-19.

- ***Students and staff will not be asked to come into the building to test if it conflicts with state and local health orders.***
- ***Families should be reassured that their health needs will be respected. This may include a student not testing due to student or family health concerns.***
- The communication method should provide families with meaningful access to the information. This should include the use of multiple communication methods (e.g., phone, text, email, parent portal, website, etc.) and the use of the student's home language.
- The communication message should explain the importance of assessments in directing interventions and supports to students and schools that are most in need, as well as the intent to decouple accountability and teacher evaluations from assessment performance this year.
- The communication plan should include response methods families can use to connect with district/school staff.
- Documentation of communications and other efforts to provide CMAS testing opportunities to all students is recommended.

The [CMAS Communications Toolkit](#) is available on CDE's website.

Health and Safety

When planning for assessment administration, the health and safety of both students and staff should be the first priority.

When possible, avoid having test administrators share materials. If needed, the district assessment coordinator can order additional *Test Administrator Manuals* through PearsonAccess^{next}. Manuals are also available on the Colorado Assessments Portal (<https://coassessments.com/>) and can be printed as needed throughout the testing window. CMAS test materials available on the Colorado Assessments Portal include:

- CMAS and CoAlt Procedures Manual
- Computer-based Testing Test Administrator Manual
- Paper-based Testing Test Administrator Manual
- Spanish SAY Directions (Test Administrator Script in Spanish)

Safety Precautions

Students and staff will not be asked to come into the building to test if it conflicts with state and local health orders. State and local health guidelines and district practices must be followed throughout the administration of CMAS. Key considerations including, but not limited to, are provided below:

- Staff and students with COVID-19 symptoms should remain home.
- When setting up a testing room, allow for as much space between students as possible (see [CDPHE's recommended spacing guidelines](#), which vary based local COVID conditions, for more information).
- If possible, set up a clear divider between students and the test administrator.
- Consider using fans in combination with opening doors and windows to increase ventilation. When implementing this, be mindful of possible interference with the students' ability to hear instructions and test security considerations.
- Wash hands before and after each test administration.
- Have students wash their hands or use hand sanitizer as they enter and exit the testing room.

Test administrators and students must follow state and local mask requirements. Additional protective measures may be followed, such as wearing gloves and conducting temperature checks.

Technology

If testing at new or multiple testing sites, connect with district technology staff to ensure testing is within the required technology systems.

If students test on shared devices, follow the same safety and sanitizing procedures implemented when devices are shared for instructional purposes. If needed, connect with IT staff about the best way to sanitize devices; do not assume all electronics can be sanitized in the same way as other surfaces.

- We expect that some districts may send devices home nightly during the testing window. Work with your District Technology Coordinator to establish procedures.
- CDE does not encourage schools to take devices from students in remote learning in order to assess students who are receiving instruction and assessment in person. Sample schedules have been provided to assessment coordinators that allow for devices to be used by multiple students, following health and safety protocols. The window has also been extended which may allow for reduced need for devices outside of those typically used by those students who are testing.
- District Assessment Coordinators should contact CDE as soon as possible if additional paper tests are needed due to limited device availability. Please note that while limited orders may be available in time for the opening of the paper window, the processing and delivery of more extensive requests may be prohibitive or delayed.

Considerations for Students who are Receiving Instruction Remotely (Remote Learners)

Districts should be planning to meet state and federal assessment requirements, including for those students who are receiving instruction remotely, to the extent practicable and that state and local health and safety requirements and guidance can be met. Schools providing in-person instruction should offer parents of remote learners an opportunity for their students to take the assessments under safe conditions as well. Neither students receiving in-person nor remote instruction should be brought into school buildings if it is not safe to do so. Students whose parents have chosen remote learning due to COVID and do not choose to send their students in to test should be coded as COVID (State Use 11) in demographic data.



Schools are currently following a variety of instructional models: in-person, hybrid, and/or remote, which may vary by the age of the students. Younger students are more likely to be receiving some in-person or hybrid instruction. For these students, CMAS testing may more resemble testing in a typical year.

While many Colorado schools and districts are transitioning to in-person instructional models, older students are more likely to be receiving all of their instruction remotely. CMAS testing for these students will require more consideration. If it is safe and consistent with state and local health guidelines to bring the students in on a smaller scale than a completely open school, consider doing so. Districts may already be doing this for local testing, in which case, those processes may be followed as applicable.

Coding of Students who were Not Able to Test Due to COVID

Despite good faith efforts, there will be some students, and perhaps entire schools, who are unable to participate in CMAS this year due to COVID. Coding within PearsonAccess^{next} or during student biographical data clean-up (SBD) will allow for these students to be marked as “Not Tested” along with a COVID indicator (State Use 11).

Common Questions

COVID-related Reasons Coding

- Can the code for students who were not able to test due to COVID (State Use 11) only be used for remote learners?
 - No, this code can be used for both remote learners and in-person students. The code may be appropriate for in-person students who are unable to complete the test due to a COVID-related reason including student illness or students who become quarantined during all or part of the test window.
- What kind of documentation is needed to indicate that a student will not test due to COVID-related reasons? Is a parent/guardian signature or letter required?
 - Consistent with parent excusal statute, districts may determine any requirements for communication from parents/guardians when students do not test due to COVID-related reasons. Also refer to ***Communicating Test Information to Families***.

Note: Coding of students who do not test due to COVID-related reasons should be separate from district documentation and coding of in-person students who do not test due to parent excusal (C.R.S. § 22-7-1013(8)(a)).

- What if the reason a parent/guardian doesn't want their student to test is because they don't want the student to miss more instruction after lost instructional time due of COVID?
 - If the student is attending school in-person, this is a parent excusal. Do not use State Use 11.

Test Environment

- To help with staffing and cohorting restrictions, can students who will not test due to parent excusal be in the same room (at opposite sides of the room) while others are CMAS testing?
 - Combining testers and non-testers in the same environment in spring 2021 is discouraged. However, given the unique circumstances this year, if there are no other possibilities, the standardized expectations that are applied for students when they are done testing (e.g., read quietly to themselves) may be applied. Consider locating non-testers away from testers. The district/school needs to ensure confidence in the test administrator's ability to actively monitor both testers and non-testers. A separate proctor to supervise non-testers is recommended. Non-testers would need to be included in the student to test administrator count (30:1).
- My schools are wanting flexibility with students requiring accommodations and keeping these students with their cohorts. Is there any flexibility? Example: Students with extended time stay with their cohort and do not test separately from the class.
 - Many accommodations do not require students to test in separate environments; however, for timing accommodations, students should be grouped together by their timing needs. Asking some students in the test environment to stop testing while allowing other students to continue testing could be confusing and disruptive to the students who require extended time. Situations like this also introduce greater possibilities for misadministration as the appropriate timing is less likely to be provided to all students in the room.
- Do accommodations need to be provided to students with disabilities and English learners?

- Yes. Students with disabilities and English learners must be provided with accommodations (changes to testing conditions that do not change what is being measured) as indicated in their educational plans.
- Can students requiring accommodations be brought in for testing on asynchronous learning days or the 5th day of the week for 4-day week districts?
 - Yes. This is an option that districts may want to consider.
- Is it possible to have more than 30 students in a room to one test administrator?
 - Test sessions that include, as an example, 31 or 32 students should not be misadministered this year as long as test administrators are able to actively proctor and monitor all of the students they are overseeing.
 - Schools may schedule test sessions that include significantly more than 30 students but less than 60 students; however, an additional test administrator is required. For groups larger than 60, the number of test administrators needed should be determined applying the same principles outlined for 30 students. Be sure to implement district policies and practices as well as state and local health guidelines when working with cohorts of students, determining group sizes within test sessions, etc. Refer to ***Scheduling*** and ***Health and Safety*** for more information.

Note: Consider room configuration when determining the student-to-test administrator ratio. Test administrators must be able to actively monitor (e.g., circulate throughout the room and remain attentive during the entire active testing unit) the space within the testing environment. Schools should make special considerations for large testing environments and for testing environments with complicated configurations.

- Can schools ask students who will not test due to parent excusal to engage in asynchronous learning at home on testing days?
 - [CDE's Policy on Instructional Time and Student Attendance for the 2020-21 Academic Year](#) allows for time spent in asynchronous learning to be considered "in attendance" if prescribed as such in the local board's definition of educational process. In practical terms, this means that based on CDE's understanding of statute, offering a remote option on testing days complies with the law. If the school was offering neither in-person nor remote, it would likely be considered a violation.
- Is there any possibility of assessing students remotely who are currently in fulltime remote learning?
 - Remote administration is not available for spring 2021. CDE consulted with state and national technical advisors, took into consideration concerns from the field, and collaborated with the CMAS assessment contractor regarding remote administration possibilities. It was determined that remote CMAS administrations this spring would introduce considerable challenges including lack of equitable access to internet and devices across the state, increased burden for parents, schools and districts, student privacy concerns, and technical issues regarding the comparability of results across administration environments. Therefore, CMAS will only be administered in-person.
- Can fulltime remote learners test after school hours or on a Saturday?
 - As long as all health and safety and CMAS testing environment requirements are met, this is possible; however, CDE and Pearson support may not be available to provide administration support



during these times. District assessment coordinators must notify CDE of these situations so PearsonAccess^{next} can be set up to allow after hours and weekend administrations.