

## **2009 CSAPA**

### **Summary of Results**

The Colorado State Assessment Program Alternate (CSAPA) is administered to students with significant cognitive disabilities who are assessed on alternate achievement standards. The revised CSAPA reflects a strongly held belief that all students can learn content knowledge.

The CSAPA began in 2001 with the administration of 4th grade Reading and Writing tests to 477 students. Since that time, the CSAPA has grown to include 27 assessments for grades 3 through 10 in Reading, Writing, and Math and grades 5, 8 and 10 in Science. During the spring 2009 administration of the CSAPA approximately 4,900 students statewide took the test.

#### **Background**

In order to ensure that all students in Colorado receive instruction on State Model Content Standards, schools and school districts are held accountable for educating all students. Every student enrolled in public schools in Colorado is required both by federal and state law to participate in either of the state's academic testing systems (CSAP or CSAPA). Students who cannot take the general CSAP due to a severe cognitive disability require a different way to demonstrate their growth towards the Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Science Standards and Expanded Benchmarks. This alternate method of testing in Colorado is the CSAPA. The CSAPA uses modified content based materials and items to assess progress of eligible students. The administration of the assessment is individualized to allow for more flexibility in testing conditions, access to the materials, and means to respond.

To be eligible to take the CSAPA, the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team considers several criteria to make a determination as to whether taking the CSAP or the CSAPA is appropriate. These include having a significant cognitive disability, what curriculum the student is working on in everyday classroom instruction and prior performance on the general CSAP. Less than 1% of all students in Colorado are eligible to take the CSAPA. The CSAPA was first administered in 2001 with just two assessments (Reading and Writing). Since that time, CSAPA tests have been developed to assess students in the same grade level and content areas as the

general CSAP. The CSAPA is a content based assessment that measures a student's progress relative to the Colorado Expanded Benchmarks.

During the 2006-2007 school year, the CSAPA Math grades 3-10 and Science grade 10 were revised. During the 2007-2008 school year, the CSAPA Reading and Writing assessments in grades 3-10 and Science assessments in grades 5 and 8 were revised. The revisions increased the validity, reliability and rigor of the assessment as outlined in recommendations from United States Department of Education Peer Review. Even though 10<sup>th</sup> grade science was revised in 2007, the performance level descriptors were revised in January 2008. As a result, a new standard setting was held in June 2008. The cut scores for 10<sup>th</sup> grade science were changed slightly; therefore, the results for 2008 and 2009 cannot be compared with earlier results.

The revised CSAPA consists of multiple choice and modified constructed response items in all content areas. Students are scored on two data points: their ability to correctly answer the item, and the level of independence required to respond to an item. The CSAPA holds schools accountable for teaching academic skills as outlined in the Colorado Expanded Benchmarks. This document provides statewide aggregate results from the 2009 CSAPA assessments in the accompanying table.

The CSAPA measures how independently a student is able to perform on each academically based item. After the student completes the assessment in each of the CSAPA content areas for their grade level, overall scores are totaled and each student is assigned a performance category for each content area. The performance levels for the CSAPA are (in order of low to high): Inconclusive, Exploring, Emerging, Developing and Novice. The description of these performance categories located on the CDE website at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/StuDis-Sub2.asp>.

### **General Results: CSAPA 2009**

As stated earlier, several content areas and grade levels underwent significant revisions or development before the 2008 CSAPA administration. These changes were necessary to update test materials, to further improve the alignment with state content standards, and to continue to raise expectations for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

The CSAPA reading and writing assessments were revised during the 2007-2008 school year in the same way as math and 10<sup>th</sup> grade science were revised the previous year. The percentages

in each CSAPA category for reading, writing and science for 2008 and 2009 are not comparable to earlier CSAPA tests. Consequently, comparisons for reading writing and science with the previous CSAPA results would not be appropriate.

In all content areas students who are in the developing or novice categories are showing proficiency on content area skills relative to the Colorado Expanded Benchmarks. On the Reading assessment between 26% and 45% of CSAPA test takers were in the Developing or Novice categories. Students in grade 5 showed the highest percentage (45%) of students in these two categories. Results indicate that percentages of students in the Developing and Novice categories increased in five grades (4, 5, 7, 8, and 10).

On the Writing assessment between 28% and 42% of CSAPA test takers were in the Developing or Novice categories. Students in grade 6 showed the highest percentage (42%) of students in these two categories. Results indicate that percentages of students in the Developing and Novice categories increased in four of eight grades (5, 6, 7, and 10).

On the Mathematics assessment between 24% and 51% of CSAPA test takers were in the Developing or Novice Categories. Students in grade 5 showed the highest percentage (51%) of students in these two categories. Results indicate that percentages of students in the Developing and Novice categories increased in five grades (3, 5, 6, 7, and 10).

In Science between 35% and 48% of CSAPA test takers were in the Developing or Novice Categories. Students in grade 8<sup>th</sup> grade students showed the highest percentage (48%) of students in these two categories. Results in grades 5 and 10 showed improvement.

Examining the CSAPA data for meaningful differences between genders and ethnic groups is problematic. The potential for confounding variables such as extent of cognitive disability and a possible over identification of males (approximately 60% of CSAPA students at every grade are male) make these comparisons difficult to interpret.