**Colorado Measures of Academic Success provide an academic checkup**

This spring our students will join students throughout Colorado in taking a new set of state tests called the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS). These are not additional tests – the CMAS will replace the TCAP, using next generation technology that will provide more meaningful feedback to help teachers and parents ensure that students master the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in today’s world.

Many adults groan when we hear the word “assessment,” recalling years of filling out bubble sheets and answering questions that didn’t seem to have any application in the real world.

Call me crazy, but I’m actually excited about the new state assessments, and here’s why: The new tests are completely online (Gone are the bubble sheets!), and they will give educators and parents a more accurate picture of what our students have learned because they ask students to show and apply what they know, instead of just picking the right answer from a multiple-choice question.

The new tests are aligned with the Colorado Academic Standards, which replaced 20-year-old standards! The new standards, in use at our school since the 2013-14 school year, update our community’s expectations for what students must know to be ready for college level courses or a career after they graduate from high school.

You may have heard that the new tests will be harder. As with any change, there will be a period of adjustment as teachers and students get used to the new standards and new tests. The new tests will, indeed, be different. We live in an increasingly complex world, and the knowledge and skills students need to succeed is, in fact, challenging. By using more advanced questions, the CMAS tests will allow students to demonstrate their critical thinking, analytical writing and problem-solving skills.

Tests are not the most exciting part of learning, but they are an important part. Just as we take our children to the doctor for regular well-child checkups, these tests tell us how students and our school are doing. Parents should know if their children are on the right path, and these new assessments will provide an “academic checkup” to help us know if our students are ready for what comes next.

We need your full participation in these tests. That means making sure your child gets a good night’s sleep and arrives to school on time. Just as the tests provide meaningful information about each student’s progress, the CMAS is a critical tool for reflecting on our work as a school. Strong participation is critical to understanding if our school is doing all it can to help our students prepare for success in college, career and life.

If you’d like to learn more about the new standards or tests, the Colorado Department of Education has a number of useful resources on its website at [www.cde.state.co.us/getnewfriendlyfortheseparentresources](http://www.cde.state.co.us/getnewfriendlyfortheseparentresources).