WHAT IS A SCALE SCORE?
Students earn a scale score on each Colorado Measures of Academic Success assessment they take. For English language arts and math, the scale scores range between 650 and 850. Performance levels will show whether a student’s score is meeting expectations. (See sidebar). Here is an example of scale scores from an Algebra II assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>650</th>
<th>700</th>
<th>725</th>
<th>750</th>
<th>808</th>
<th>850</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May need additional support to be college ready</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>College and career ready</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHAT IS A MEAN SCALE SCORE?
A mean scale score is the average performance of a group of students on an assessment. Specifically, a mean scale score is calculated by adding all individual student scores and dividing by the number of total scores. It can also be referred to as an average.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEAN SCALE SCORE AND PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS AT BENCHMARK?

What is performance level?
Performance levels help students, families, educators and school officials understand how students are performing against the content standards for college and career readiness.

The performance levels indicate what a typical student at each level should know based on their command of grade-level standards.

There are five performance levels:
• Level 5: Exceeded expectations
• Level 4: Met expectations
• Level 3: Approached expectations
• Level 2: Partially met expectations
• Level 1: Did not yet meet expectations
HOW DO I INTERPRET THE SCORE?
The mean scale score can best be understood by comparing it to the assessment performance bands. These bands identify if groups of students, on average, are meeting or not meeting grade-level expectations. Table 1 shows the scale scores that are associated with each performance level by assessment and grade.

For example, if the mean scale score for a group of students is 558 on the 8th grade science assessment it could be said that on average, the students “Approached Expectations.” The mean scale score doesn’t tell you the percentage of students that fall within each of the performance bands.

Table 1. Assessment Scale Scores and Corresponding Performance Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CMAS Assessment</th>
<th>Level 1 – Did Not Yet Meet Expectations</th>
<th>Level 2 – Partially Met Expectations</th>
<th>Level 3 – Approached Expectations</th>
<th>Level 4- Met Expectations</th>
<th>Level 5 – Exceeded Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Language Arts and Math (All Grades)</td>
<td>650-699</td>
<td>700-724</td>
<td>725-749</td>
<td>750 to exceeds cut score</td>
<td>Variable based on assessment - 850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (Grade 5)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>300-545</td>
<td>546-649</td>
<td>650-770</td>
<td>771-900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (Grade 8)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>300-555</td>
<td>556-651</td>
<td>652-784</td>
<td>785-900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (High School)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>300-542</td>
<td>543-672</td>
<td>673-773</td>
<td>774-900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOW ARE MEAN SCALE SCORES USED?
Mean scale scores are used to measure achievement for school and district accountability. The scores can be calculated for students at the district, school, and group levels. Mean scale scores can be used as part of the Unified Improvement Planning process too. Remember, achievement on state assessments is combined with growth on assessments, as well as postsecondary measures for high schools and districts, to determine overall school and district performance.

WHY USE MEAN SCALE SCORES FOR ACCOUNTABILITY?
With the mean scale score, all student results count. No matter the achievement level of students, all of their scores influence the mean score; and changes in scores for all students impact the mean scale score as well. In contrast, the percent of students meeting expectations is not impacted unless students move above or below the cut score for “met expectations.” Changes for students within Levels 1-3 or Level 5 will not impact the percentage of students meeting expectations, meaning there is not an incentive within the accountability system to focus on students who are scoring at the highest or lowest levels.

There is greater opportunity for transparency in reporting mean scale score results, because the smaller numbers associated with meeting expectations are more likely to require suppression to protect individual student privacy.
### Where can I learn more?

- For additional information concerning the use of mean scale scores for accountability and improvement, please contact Dan Jorgensen at Jorgensen_d@cde.state.co.us
- Accountability fact sheets: [http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/factsheetsandfaqs-accountability](http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/factsheetsandfaqs-accountability)