

SUPPORTING Improved Standards and Assessments

Transitioning to 21st Century Standards and Assessments

The power of Colorado's education improvement efforts lies in having a comprehensive system consisting of relevant and rigorous standards, aligned and meaningful assessments, excellent teachers and school leaders, and high-performing schools and districts. All aspects of the system are continuously improving to advance student learning and prepare students to succeed in an increasingly competitive workforce.

Overview of Standards and Assessments

Colorado is implementing updated academic standards in 10 content areas, called the Colorado Academic Standards, for preschool through 12th grade. The Colorado Academic Standards clearly delineate what students are expected to master in each subject and grade, with each grade level building to the next, to ensure students have the academic knowledge and skills needed to be successful in college and career.

The standards for reading, writing and communicating, and mathematics incorporate the Common Core State Standards while maintaining the unique aspects of the Colorado Academic Standards, including 21st century skills and prepared graduate competencies. The updated standards are focused and rigorous, articulating the prepared graduate competencies and the points of mastery at each grade level that lead to college and career readiness.

Meaningful and relevant assessments work hand in hand with rigorous academic standards. Assessments provide ongoing measures of student learning at each grade level. The data from assessments is critical in determining if educational goals are being met and if students are on track to graduate prepared for college and career. The Colorado Academic Standards are the foundation for the state assessments in science, social studies, English language arts and math.

Good instruction and assessment cannot occur in isolation of one another. Each informs the other, and they become the checks and balances that drive measurable student learning and achievement.

New State Tests: Colorado Measures of Academic Success

Colorado tests are changing in order to accurately assess student mastery of the new Colorado Academic Standards. With the standards being more focused, coherent and rigorous, assessments must adapt to align with them. The

Colorado's State Assessment Timeline

1997-2011

Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)

- Measured student learning of the Colorado Model Content Standards (math, reading, writing and science)

2012-13

Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP)

- Allowed school districts to transition their instruction from the old standards to the new standards

2013-14

TCAP and Colorado Measures of Academic Success

- TCAP continued for reading, writing and math
- First year of new Colorado-developed social studies and science tests (part of the state's new Colorado Measures of Academic Success)

2014-15

Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS)

- First year of new PARRC-developed English language arts and math tests
- Second year of Colorado-developed social studies and science assessments



Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) is being phased out and replaced by the Colorado Measures of Academic Success, the state's new English language arts, math, science and social studies tests.

PARCC-Developed English Language Arts and Math Tests

Colorado is a governing member of a multi-state assessment consortium called the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Involvement in this consortium allows the Colorado Department of Education staff, along with staff from the Colorado Department of Higher Education and Colorado educators, to collaborate with individuals from across the U.S. to develop common tests for English language arts and math.

Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, these new computer-based assessments will be administered in grades 3-11 for English language arts and in grades 3-8 with three high school assessments for math. Assessments in each content area will be administered in two components: a performance-based assessment administered after approximately 75 percent of the school year and an end-of-year assessment administered after approximately 90 percent of the school year.

Colorado-Developed Science and Social Studies Tests

New state science and social studies tests measuring the Colorado Academic Standards were administered online in Colorado for the first time in the 2013-14 school year. These tests are being developed collaboratively by the Colorado Department of Education; the assessment contractor, Pearson; and Colorado educators. Elementary (4th grade social studies and 5th grade science) and middle school (7th grade social studies and 8th grade science) tests were administered in the spring of 2014. High school (12th grade science and social studies) tests were administered in the fall of 2014.

Updated Standards, Aligned Tests and New Scores

Planning for new state tests requires preparing students to meet the state's new and more rigorous standards on which the assessments are based: more rigorous standards means more rigorous tests. It also means the possibility of an 'implementation score dip.' While the new tests won't be given until the spring of 2015, it is important to begin discussing how to appropriately interpret scores on the new tests. Any possible future test score dips will be a result of having higher, more rigorous standards.

Where can I learn more?

- CDE Assessment website: www.cde.state.co.us/Assessment
- CDE Standards website: www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction
- To view all CDE fact sheets, visit: www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/factsheetsandfaqs