

Colorado Measures of Academic Success

WHAT TO EXPECT FOR THE 2015-16 SCHOOL YEAR



COLORADO
Department of Education

A resource for parents and educators

www.cde.state.co.us

Overview

In 2009, Colorado implemented new, more rigorous academic standards to ensure all Colorado students are prepared for college and career success. The Colorado Academic Standards set clear, consistent guidelines for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level across [10 subject areas](#), including English language arts (ELA), math, science and social studies. The higher standards were designed by educators and researchers, with significant input from higher education and workforce leaders, to help students prepare for life after high school. Prior to the adoption of the standards, too many students in Colorado had been graduating from high school without the problem-solving and critical-thinking skills they need to succeed in college and in the workforce. These new standards were designed to change that.

The need for updated standards



Only 25 percent of Colorado's graduating class of 2014 met the ACT college readiness standards in all four subjects



34 percent of graduates from the class of 2013 who went to public colleges in Colorado needed remediation in at least one class



By 2020, 74 percent of all jobs in Colorado
— 3 MILLION JOBS —
will require education beyond high school

What is different about these standards?

Across all 10 content areas, the standards demand more of our students and teachers

RIGOR

Students use inquiry, critical thinking and creative processes to solve problems

RELEVANCY

Students engage in real world scenarios that require the application and transfer of concepts and skills

DISCIPLINARY LITERACY

Students learn to speak, think, work and argue like mathematicians, artists, scientists, authors and historians

Figure 1



New assessments align with new standards

To accurately measure students' mastery of these skills, Colorado adopted new assessments that align with the [Colorado Academic Standards](#). Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) are the state's common measurement of students' progress at the end of the school year in English language arts, math, science and social studies. Designed to be administered online, the tests feature a variety of interactive questions that are more engaging and aligned with 21st century teaching and learning practices.

With the new standards-aligned assessments, educators and parents will know how their students are performing and growing over time, and how they compare to their peers across the district and the state. In the case of the English language arts and math tests, students and parents will also be able to compare performance with students around the country.

Social studies and science tests

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. The [Colorado Department of Education](#), testing contractor Pearson, and Colorado educators collaborated to develop these assessments, ensuring alignment to the new standards, as well as innovative ways of measuring knowledge and understanding.

Math and English language arts tests

As required by law, Colorado's tests in English language arts and math were developed in collaboration with a consortia of states, known as [PARCC](#), that came together to develop a shared way to measure how students are performing academically based on more rigorous college and career ready standards. Colorado is a member of PARCC's governing board and Colorado educators were highly involved in the development of the tests.

2015-16 tests

In the 2015-16 school year, CMAS testing will take place from April 11–29. However, the Colorado Department of Education will allow districts to begin testing one to three weeks early if they cannot complete testing within the allotted timeframe due to limitations on the number of computers or other devices needed for testing.

In addition, a new state law allows districts to use paper versions of any online test.

Colorado Measures of Academic Success 2015-16 Calendar
JULY 2015 Results released for elementary and middle school students' spring 2015 tests in science and social studies
AUGUST 2015 Results released for high school students' fall 2014 tests in science
NOVEMBER 2015 Results available for students' spring 2015 tests in English language arts and math
APRIL 11 – 29, 2016 Administration of CMAS tests in science, social studies, English language arts and math
SPRING 2016 College entrance exam for 11th-grade students. College preparatory exam for 10th-grade students
SUMMER 2016 Results available for elementary, middle and high school students' 2016 CMAS tests in science, social studies, English language arts and math



What tests will students take?

	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	Grades 3 through 9		SCIENCE	Grades 5, 8 and 11
	MATH	Grades 3 through 9		COLLEGE PREPARATORY EXAM	Grade 10
	SOCIAL STUDIES	Grades 4 and 7 To be done on a sampling basis with schools participating once every three years		COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAM	Grade 11

Why are statewide tests important?

Participation in CMAS is important because results help students, parents, schools and districts understand whether students have mastered the content they need to know by the end of the school year. At the same time, parents have a right to control their children’s education. A new state law requires local school boards to develop a policy allowing parents to excuse their students from participating in one or more state assessments.

How much time will tests take?

2015-16 CMAS Testing Hours

Tests are broken down into individual sessions lasting between 60 and about 100 minutes



One-third of schools will participate in social studies testing each year

Some Colorado students will participate in PARCC’s 90-minute field test of questions that could be used in future years.



How will state tests be used?

Parents should know whether or not their children are gaining the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in today's complex world. CMAS is the only common measurement for Colorado students, helping teachers and parents understand whether students have mastered the content they need to know by the end of each school year in order to be on track for college and career success. Parents can also use CMAS scores to see how their students and schools are doing compared to other students and schools across the district, the state and the nation.

Schools and districts will use CMAS results to make improvements to instruction or to develop additional support and enrichment for students who need more help mastering the standards.

CMAS results will not be used for district accreditation ratings in 2015 or for educator evaluations during the 2014-15 school year. This "time out" created by the state legislature will allow educators, schools and districts to gain more experience with the standards and aligned assessments before they are used for accountability purposes.

The Colorado Department of Education will not assign new school or district ratings during the fall of 2015, meaning schools and districts will retain the ratings they were assigned at the end of 2014. Ratings will be issued again in the fall of 2016. Even after the scores become part of accountability measures, they will not serve as the sole measurement for schools and teachers – other factors will still apply.

When will results be available?

As parents, students and teachers receive their score reports, it's important to keep in mind that the CMAS tests are new and designed to measure complex thinking and problem solving skills necessary to succeed in the careers of the 21st century. CMAS scores should not be compared to the old TCAP or CSAP scores. With CMAS, Colorado has essentially pressed the reset button. The new tests will set a new benchmark from which we will measure the future success of all Colorado students.

The results of elementary and middle school students' 2015 tests in science and social studies were released in July 2015. Students and parents should receive their individual student scores when they return to school for the 2015-16 school year.

The results of students' 2015 tests in English language arts and math will be released in the fall. With any new test, the process of setting performance levels must be completed before the English language arts and math scores are released.

In future years, the English language arts and math scores will be available before the beginning of the next school year. Science and social studies scores will continue to be available in July.

About Performance Level Setting

Over the summer, PARCC convened educators, postsecondary faculty and workforce professionals to determine the range of scores that matches each performance level. This process results in the scores being sorted into five performance levels ranging from "exceeded expectations" to "did not yet meet expectations." Students at or above the fourth level have met expectations of the academic standards and are likely to be on track to be ready for college and career upon high school graduation.

Where can I learn more?

- www.cde.state.co.us/communications/tools
- www.cde.state.co.us/communications