

ASSESSMENT: QUICK GUIDE FOR CHARTER SCHOOL DEVELOPERS

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California
Charter Schools
Association

1. STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR TESTING

On January 1, 2014, California Education Code Section 60640 established the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). In the spring of 2014, CAASPP officially replaced the former state assessment system. CAASPP is a set of assessments that includes:

- Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) *See Section 2 to learn more about SBAC.*
- California Alternate Assessment
- California Standards Test (CST)
- California Modified Assessment (CMA)
- California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA)
- Standards-based Tests in Spanish (STS)

More Resources

- › [CAASPP Assessments Chart](#) available on the CDE website
- › [Subscribe](#) to CDE CAASPP Updates

▷ All students in **grades 3-8 and 11** are required to take the following annual assessments:

- Smarter Balanced: English Language Arts (ELA)*
- Smarter Balanced: Mathematics*

**Grade 11 math and ELA assessments incorporate the [Early Assessment Program \(EAP\)](#), which provides students, families and high schools with early signals about college readiness.*

▷ All students in **grades 5, 8 and 10** are required to take the annual Science CST. Science standards are still being tested under the old system of assessment until a new assessment is developed to align with the Next Generation Science Standards.

▷ **Students with significant cognitive disabilities** who are unable to take the above assessments, and whose individualized education program (IEP) indicates assessment with an alternate test, are required to take the following assessments:

- Such students in grades 3-8 and 11 are required to take the California Alternate Assessment in ELA and mathematics. In the spring of 2015, this assessment was a field test that did not yield individual student scores, rather, examined the performance of test items.
- Such students in grades 5, 8 and 10 are required to take either the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) or the California Modified Assessment (CMA) for science. The IEP dictates which of these two assessments is required. These assessments will be used until a new assessment, and alternate assessment, is developed to align with the Next Generation Science Standards.

▷ **Optional:** Students in grades 2 through 11 who have been enrolled in school in the United States for less than 12 months, and whose **primary language is not English**, may also take the Standards-based Tests in Spanish (STS) to assess reading and language arts. In addition, students who are **receiving instruction in Spanish** may take the STS. However, any student who takes the STS is still required to take the Smarter Balanced ELA. Note that this test is tied to the old state standards, and is not Common Core aligned.

▷ In addition to CAASP requirements, there are two additional state assessment requirements:

- CELDT/ELPAC* testing is required for **English Learners at all grade levels**.
- FITNESSGRAM testing is required for all students in **grades 5, 7 and 9**, regardless of whether they are enrolled in a physical education class.

**California will be transitioning from the CELDT to the ELPAC by 2018. For more information on this transition, visit the [CDE website](#) and review this [CDE information guide](#).*

The above state assessment requirements are summarized in the chart on the following page.

State Assessment Requirements by Grade Level

| Grade Level | Required Assessment | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|-------------|
| K | | | | | |
| 1 | | | | | |
| 2 | | | Optional: Standards-based Tests in Spanish | English Learners: CELDT/ELPAC | |
| 3 | SBAC ELA / Math (or CA Alt Assmt) | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | |
| 5 | | Science CST (or CAPA or CMA) | | | FITNESSGRAM |
| 6 | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | FITNESSGRAM |
| 8 | Science CST (or CAPA or CMA) | | | | |
| 9 | | FITNESSGRAM | | | |
| 10 | | Science CST (or CAPA or CMA) | | | |
| 11 | SBAC ELA / Math (or CA Alt Assmt) | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | |

Note: The California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) has been suspended for 2015–16, 2016–17, and 2017–18. For more information on high school equivalency and proficiency exams, visit the [HSET](#) and [CHSPE](#) web pages.

2. THE SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT

Around 2010, two state consortia emerged to develop assessments that were aligned to the new Common Core state standards. Both tests are considerably different than previous state required tests, in both content as well as delivery. Both assessments are administered electronically.

Some states adopted the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), while others, including California, have adopted the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). At this time, the majority of states have adopted SBAC.

More Resources

- › The CDE's [SBAC webpage](#)
- › [SBAC Assessment webpage](#)
- › [CCSA resources](#) for the first SBAC data release

The SBAC is a computer adaptive test, meaning the questions and difficulty adapt to individual student responses. In terms of content, the test prioritizes skills and processes over simple content knowledge. The SBAC consists of three components:

- **Summative Assessment:** The summative assessment is administered annually during the last 12 weeks of the school year. This assessment includes a computer adaptive test and performance tasks. Results are norm referenced and should be used to guide instructional decision making. CDE recommends schools use the results (1) at a school-level to inform strategic investments and (2) at a classroom-level to inform teacher instruction.
- **Formative Assessment Practices:** This is a digital library of professional development materials, resources and tools aligned to the Common Core standards and SBAC. These resources are designed to help schools address challenges and differentiate instruction. The digital library contains nearly 3,000 vetted lessons for grades K-12 that are aligned to particular Common Core standards. Teachers should explore the digital library to find lessons that help them (1) obtain evidence during class about what their students do and don't understand and (2) adapt their lesson that day or the next day to fill in gaps.
- **Optional Interim Assessments:** These assessments, administered at locally determined intervals, include computer adaptive tests and performance tasks. These tests are designed to provide schools with actionable data on student progress. In addition, these tests support the development of state end-of-course tests. There are two types (described below), and for now it makes sense to use just one because they both include many of the same questions. The CDE recommends schools pilot the Interim Comprehensive Assessments in a few classes and have all students do at least the Interim Assessment Blocks that do not require hand-scoring.
 - Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs) replicate the summative exam in length and content. Currently there is one for each tested grade (3-8 and 11) and subject. They include lots of questions that must be hand scored locally, but the result is a scale score that's comparable to the summative exam.
 - Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs) are short and test specific targets (e.g. 3rd grade Measurement and Data). Currently there are at least 3 for each tested grade and

subject. Some of them can be graded entirely by computer, but the result is a relatively blunt claim score: Below, Near, or Above.

It is important for charter schools to note that SBAC interim data is improving, but is generally not as helpful to schools as data from other interim assessments such as those included in Section 4 of this guide. SBAC interim data is not as clearly norm referenced, and it may be harder to use SBAC interim data to make decisions about instructional direction throughout the school year. For this reason, **it is recommended that schools choose a norm referenced, Common Core aligned, interim assessment** to administer throughout the school year.

3. BEST PRACTICES FOR ASSESSMENT

Assessment during the Transition to Common Core & CAASPP

During the 2014-15 school year, a group of 37 school leaders from Los Angeles and San Diego formed a professional learning network to study the impact of the transition to the Common Core standards. They analyzed best practices from early implementation states, implemented solutions at their individual schools and shared their learnings. In addition, leaders from San Bernardino, Central Valley and the Bay Area were interviewed to share their discoveries of the biggest barriers to implementation of the new standards in the 2014-15 school year. Findings were reported in a whitepaper titled "Transitioning to the Common Core in California Charter Schools: Challenges and Solutions."

For Review...

Common Core 101

- › Read more at CCSA.org
- › Access CCSA's Common Core [Fact Sheet](#)

"Ultimately, six common needs were identified across all the charter leaders participating in this study. These included increased funding for out of classroom personnel, access to other charters and charter leaders, strong models of effective schools to study and learn from, aligned Common Core resources that can be used by teachers,

readily available and aligned

formative assessments, and advocacy support to message anticipated drops in student assessment results. Additionally, rural leaders also needed solutions for how to access peers separated by distance, additional advocacy support to communicate effectively about needed shifts in instruction to conservative communities, and support for technology access and use".

Read the full whitepaper:

- › [Transitioning to the Common Core in California Charter Schools: Challenges & Solutions](#)

Best Practices

As the state completes the transition to the Common Core and implements the new CAASPP system, it is recommended that schools use additional, non-required assessments (in addition to CAASPP) to maintain more complete data on student learning progress. By implementing additional, interim assessments, schools can access data to guide decision making throughout the school year, as well as illustrate progress to authorizers and other stakeholders. In addition, for similar reasons, schools may consider testing in additional grades such as 2, 9 and 10, when CAASPP testing is not required.

At the very least, **it is recommended that schools use a norm referenced, Common Core aligned, interim assessment to benchmark student growth and learning throughout the school year.** CCSA recommends using a tool like the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). *See Section 4 to learn more about choosing additional Common Core aligned assessments.*

Strong best practices include using these additional assessment results to analyze individual student, grade level and sub-group performance in order to impact educational programming.

Overall, assessment practices should be well aligned to the educational program and mission of the charter school.

Additional best practices include:

- Do not wait too long into the charter term to implement a norm referenced assessment. This makes it difficult to demonstrate student growth in learning at the time of charter renewal.
- Use the results of the interim assessments to make changes to the instructional program throughout the school year.
- Keep in mind that the new SBAC formative, in-year assessments should not replace a norm based interim assessment administered at regular intervals throughout the school year. The data provided by SBAC interim assessments is improving, but norm referencing may not be as straightforward, and the connection to instructional direction may not be as clear, as other assessments such as those included in Section 4 of this guide. Further, charter schools must locally score the SBAC interim assessment. The administration and scoring of this exam requires an investment of time, and authorizers may question the accuracy of local scoring.
- Anticipate technology needs in advance of annual assessments. This includes giving students ample time to use the technology in preparation for the assessment.

4. CHOOSING ADDITIONAL COMMON CORE ALIGNED ASSESSMENTS

As previously noted, it is recommended that schools choose a norm referenced, Common Core aligned, interim assessment to administer throughout the school year. While not required, such an assessment will provide information on student learning progress and allow schools to assess whether teaching and learning are on track for CAASPP success. In addition, results from such an assessment will allow schools to better illustrate progress to authorizers and other stakeholders, especially during the state transition to Common Core and CAASPP testing.

California's charter schools commonly use the following assessments for this purpose:

- **Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP):** The NWEA MAP is computer adaptive, norm referenced and Common Core aligned. Visit [CCSA's website](#) to learn more, including eligibility for a discount.
- **Renaissance STAR:** Renaissance offers various STAR assessment products that are computer adaptive, norm referenced and Common Core aligned. Visit [renaissance.com](#) to learn more.
- **iREADY:** Learn more about this norm-referenced assessment at the [iREADY California website](#).
- **ACT Aspire:** Visit the [ACT Aspire website](#) to learn more. This assessment is norm-referenced, and particularly recommended for grades 9 and 10, prior to SBAC testing in grade 11.

In addition, schools may choose to administer such assessments in additional grade levels, when CAASPP testing is not required, such as grade 2. For high school, in particular, CCSA is currently investigating whether the **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)** assessment would be a useful interim measure. Specifically, the PARCC would be administered in 9th and 10th grades, prior to required SBAC testing in grade 11. The PARCC is a Common Core aligned, SBAC alternative. More information is available at [PARCCOnline.org](#). As mentioned above, the ACT Aspire assessment is also useful for grades 9 and 10.

When choosing which assessment is best for your school, it is recommended you consider the following questions:

- *Is the assessment **computer adaptive**, which simulates the SBAC?*
- *Is the assessment **norm referenced**? Norm referenced assessments allow you to compare your students' performance to students at other schools.*
- *Is the assessment **aligned to the Common Core curriculum**? This alignment will provide the most actionable results, allowing you to make educated decisions to impact students' progress toward learning the new standards.*
- *Is the assessment **appropriate for your educational program and mission**, including the grade levels you serve?*
- *Finally, is the assessment **priced affordably** for your program?*