



STATEWIDE STUDENT ASSESSMENTS

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Assessments provide teachers, parents, students, policymakers, and other stakeholders in Colorado's education system with a way of measuring student performance against state standards. First administered on a statewide basis in 1997 under the name Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP), statewide assessments are designed to provide measurements of students' academic progress and are used to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers, administrators, schools, and districts.

History of assessments in Colorado.

In the 1990s, the General Assembly passed House Bill 93-1313, initiating standards-based education and assessment in Colorado. The bill required the adoption of statewide content standards, and created the CSAP to measure students' progress against those standards.

In 2008, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 08-212, or Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), which required changes to Colorado's academic content standards, and new assessments aligned with the new standards.

From 2012 until 2014, students in Colorado took the Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) assessments, which provided a transition between CSAP and the new Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) assessments. The CMAS program utilizes English language arts and mathematics assessments developed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium.

The CMAS science and social studies assessments were developed for Colorado. All four CMAS assessments were rolled out in 2015.

During the 2015 legislative session, the General Assembly passed legislation allowing the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to instead administer the social studies assessment in a representative sample of public schools, so long as it administers the assessment in each public school at least once every three years. Additionally, pending U.S. Department of Education approval of considering 9th grade to be part of high school, subject matter testing in grades 10 through 12 was eliminated. Tenth and eleventh graders are now required to take a national college readiness exam. Further, school districts are prohibited from using assessment results to calculate teachers' effectiveness ratings for the 2014-15 school year, and CDE is prohibited from issuing accreditation status ratings for the 2015-16 school year. The General Assembly also authorized a pilot program for districts wishing to evaluate local assessments against statewide assessments.

Federal law. In 2001, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Among its many provisions, NCLB requires that states align standardized tests to academic content standards and test students annually in reading and math from grade 3 through grade 8 and once during high school. The law also requires states to test in science once each during elementary school, middle school, and high school.

**Table 1
Assessments Required by State Law**

	P	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
CMAS - English Language/Arts					X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
CMAS - Mathematics					X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
CMAS - Science*						X				X	X			
CMAS - Social Studies*						X				X	X			
ACCESS for ELLs**		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Early Literacy		X	X	X										
School Readiness	X	X												
College Entrance Exam												X	X	
Spanish Reading/Writing					X	X								
NAEP***						X				X				

* Science and social studies tests are required once in elementary school, middle school, and high school. Tested grades are chosen by each school district. Social studies assessments will be given to a representative sample of students beginning in the 2015-16 school year.

** English proficiency tests are given to English language learners during their enrollment in ELL-specific programs and classes at any time during their public education.

*** The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) is given to a sample of 4th and 8th graders. Participation in NAEP is a requirement for recipients of Title I funds.

In September 2011, the U.S. Department of Education invited states to apply for waivers from the requirements of NCLB. Colorado's waiver request was approved in 2012 and allows the state to evaluate if students graduate from high school ready for careers or college in place of meeting NCLB's 2014 deadline for achieving specific student proficiency rates. The waiver allows the state to use its own accountability system in place of federal requirements.

Assessments in Colorado. Student assessments required by state law are indicated in Table 1.

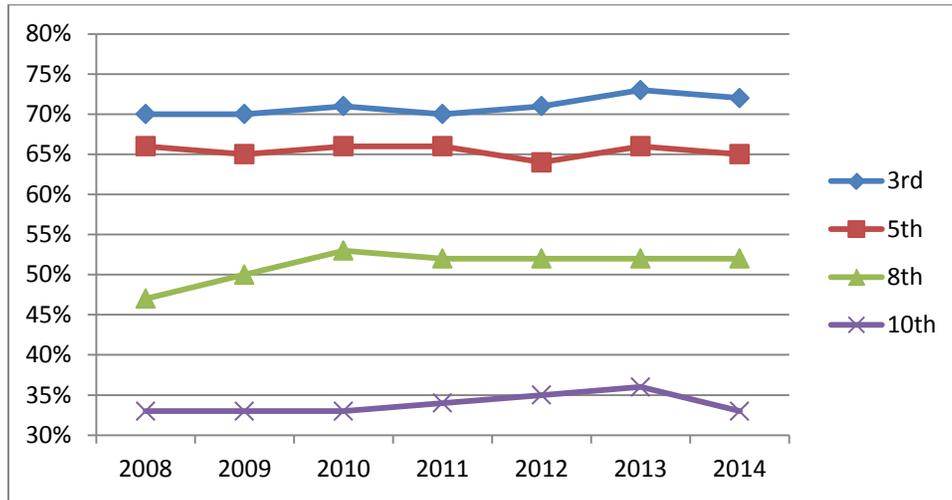
Results. Since 2008, assessments in reading and math show that student achievement has stayed roughly at the same levels statewide, with some exceptions. Figure 1 shows the percentage of students scoring proficient or above in math in 3rd, 5th, 8th, and 10th grades from 2008 to 2014.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of students scoring proficient or above in reading in the same grade levels.

How data are used. Results of statewide assessments are used by the state to measure the performance of schools, districts, and teachers in educating students to meet state standards. Under the provisions of Senate Bill 10-191, starting in the 2015-16 school year half of an educator's effectiveness rating will be derived from student academic growth over time as measured by statewide assessments.

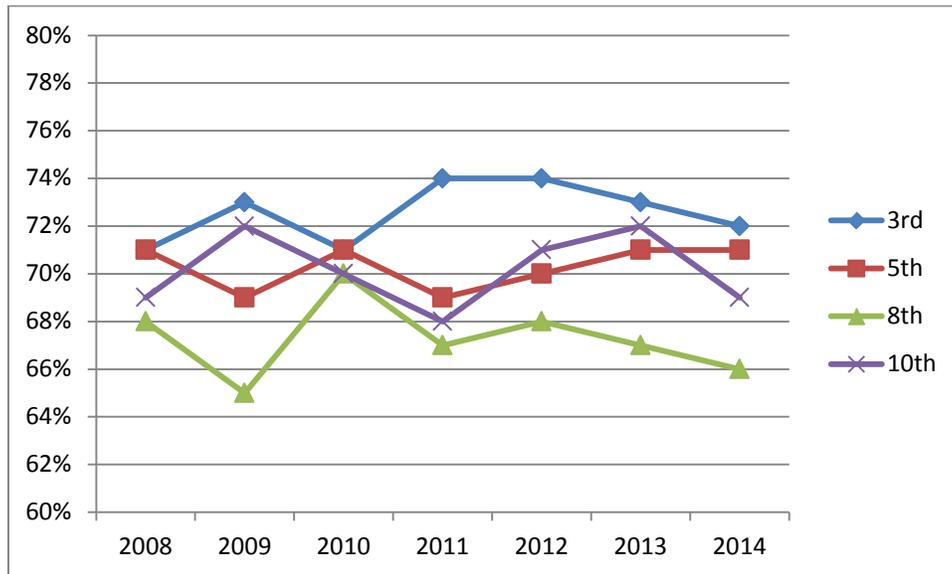
Cost of assessments. The General Assembly appropriated approximately \$31.1 million for FY 2015-16 for assessments required by state law. In addition, federal funding contributed approximately \$8 million. School districts bear additional costs related to the state's assessment program, such as technology upgrades required by the move to online testing, as well as substitute teachers, transportation, and teacher training.

Figure 1
Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Above in Math



Source: Colorado Department of Education

Figure 2
Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Above in Reading



Source: Colorado Department of Education