

# The Role of State Assessments in Increasing Academic Achievement



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Colorado has a series of educational standards known as the Colorado Academic Standards that outline academic objectives for students in every grade across 10 content areas. Fully implemented in the 2013-14 school year, the standards raised the bar for Colorado students, increasing expectations so they are prepared to succeed in college or careers upon high school graduation. To measure students' mastery of more rigorous standards, Colorado administers a set of common assessments known as the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) and PSAT/SAT.

## PURPOSE AND VALUE OF STATE ASSESSMENTS

CMAS and PSAT/SAT are the only common measuring tools for Colorado students. Measuring real-world skills like problem-solving and critical thinking, the tests are aligned to classroom work so teachers do not have to "teach to the test." Instruction based on the standards is the best preparation.

"I want my son to graduate high school on time ready for college or a career, and one way to ensure I know that he is on this path is by taking the state exam."

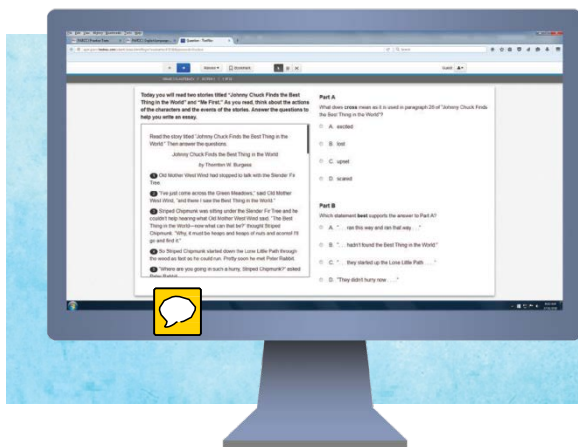
Maribel Banuelos

While state assessments are only one measure of student learning, having all Colorado students take this set of assessments provides parents with answers to these important questions:

- Did my child meet the state standards?
- How well is my child doing compared to other students?
- Which schools and districts perform best in preparing students for academic success?
- Which districts have the best performance on the state assessments for children with special needs?

Additionally, state assessment results provide:

- Information districts can use, in combination with other district information, to evaluate programs.
- Information educators need to help improve instruction.
- Identification of districts and schools that have struggling students, so help can be provided.
- Recognition of high performing systems so others may learn from them.

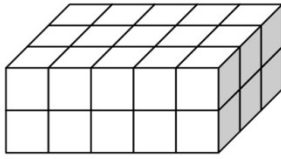


## Practice Items Help Students Be Ready

Parents are sometimes concerned that participating in these tests can cause anxiety in their child or that preparing for the tests takes away time from instruction. Because these tests are aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards and classroom instruction, they should not cause any more anxiety than any other tests students take. Also, practice items are available to help familiarize parents and students with test content and structure.

## Practice Items – Fifth-Grade Math - English and Spanish

The right rectangular prism shown is made from cubes. Each cube is 1 cubic unit.

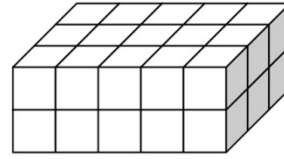


What is the volume, in cubic units, of the right rectangular prism?

Enter your answer in the box.

 cubic units

El prisma recto rectangular que se muestra está compuesto por cubos. Cada cubo es 1 unidad cúbica.



¿Cuál es el volumen, en unidades cúbicas, del prisma recto rectangular?

Escribe tu respuesta en el recuadro.

 unidades cúbicas

To learn more, click on "Practice Tests" at:

<https://co.testnav.com> No

sign-in is required.

### Fewer tests, with faster turnaround of results

Since the full set of CMAS exams were first administered in the 2014-15 school year, the legislature and the State Board of Education have made several changes to decrease the number of tests students take and to shorten the tests.

- High school students no longer take CMAS ELA and math, and instead take the PSAT and SAT college entrance assessments, which are also aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards.
- CMAS social studies tests are given to only a third of students in fourth, seventh and 11<sup>th</sup> grades.
- The State Board of Education and CDE are committed to continuing to look for ways to provide test results to districts faster, and in 2018 individual student results were provided to districts in June.

### Parental excuse from participation

State law allows parents to excuse their child from taking state assessments. If a parent wants to excuse his or her child from participating in an assessment, the district is not allowed to impose negative consequences on the students or parents including prohibiting school attendance, imposing an unexcused absence, or prohibiting participation in extracurricular activities.

Likewise, districts cannot impose unreasonable burdens or requirements on a student to discourage the student from taking an assessment or to encourage the student's parent to excuse his/her child from the assessment. They must offer all students who are excused from testing the opportunity to participate in celebrations or incentives related to the assessments. Parents should know, however, that non-participation in state assessments means they will not have information on their child's attainment and growth on the state standards compared to other children.

### Data Security

CDE is committed to ensuring that data on individual students are secure. The department has strict policies and procedures in place to maintain data security. For more information on data privacy and security please go to <http://www.cde.state.co.us/dataprivacyandsecurity>.

