



# Spring 2021 State Assessment Results



## Why did students take assessments last spring during the pandemic?

State assessments provide critical information about individual student performance in relation to the Colorado Academic Standards and about where Colorado needs to better support students, teachers and schools.

The Colorado Measures of Academic Success are the state’s common measurement of students’ progress at the end of the school year. The assessment results can be used as a temperature check to identify where the pandemic may have impacted learning across Colorado student groups and where increased support will be needed.

## Were 2021 tests different from tests given in other years?

While Colorado administered a reduced set of state assessments in 2021, the content covered by the tests and the expectations were the same as tests from previous years. Because the scale scores and performance levels retain the same meaning from previous years, results can continue to provide information about what individual students know and can do in relation to the grade-level expectations of the standards. Results for students who had a relatively typical testing experience may be interpreted with reasonable confidence.

For example, a student’s CMAS score of Met Expectations or Exceeded Expectations may be considered an indicator of mastery of the standards. In addition, any significant difference in test administration conditions from past years should be considered on an individual basis.

## How did COVID-19 conditions impact student learning?

COVID-19 reshaped many aspects of education in the 2020-21 school year, including reduced or disrupted learning opportunities for some students, schools and districts. Students across Colorado learned through a variety of models, including in-person, remote and hybrid instruction. In response to the pandemic, some schools and districts may have adjusted or reduced the content covered during instruction from a typical year, while the assessments maintained the same expectations from previous years. For example, CMAS continued to measure the breadth and depth of the grade-level expectations contained in the [Colorado Academic Standards](#). As a result of these conditions, some degree of impact on student achievement should be anticipated.

## Why did fewer students participate in the state assessment?

Some students were not able to take the tests because of test site limitations or safety and other parental concerns. This means some participation rates for districts, schools or student groups are lower than in past years. As participation rates decrease, challenges with interpreting results increase. In addition, the wide availability of different learning settings – in-person, remote learning or hybrid – means that students had varying access to take state tests. As a result, some student groups will be overrepresented in the results and others may be underrepresented. Participation rates should be closely reviewed when interpreting local aggregated results as the rates will vary greatly across the state this year.

Even though the state’s participation rates are lower than in past years, the assessment results, when combined with other data, can still help inform the type of supports students and schools need to be successful.

Note: Because of COVID-19 conditions in Colorado in Spring 2021, some state tests were not required to be administered unless requested by a parent, resulting in lower participation. For more information about which tests were not required to be administered and unique interpretation considerations, see *Which state tests were administered in 2021?* at the end of this document.

### LEARN MORE

- To learn more, visit: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/tools-assessments>
- View all CDE fact sheets: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/factsheetsandfaqs>



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## How can teachers use assessment results?

State assessments provide point-in-time snapshots of what individual students know and can do. In any year, a single test score does not provide a complete picture of student achievement. Teachers should encourage parents to consider their children's results within the context of the variety of potential learning disruptions they may have encountered.

As mentioned above, results for students who had a relatively typical testing experience may be interpreted with reasonable confidence. For example, a student's CMAS math score of Performance Level 4: Met Expectations or Level 5: Exceeded Expectations may be considered an indicator of mastery of the standards. Test results can be considered along with grades and local tests to identify areas to accelerate student learning.

## How will state and district leaders use the assessment results?

Assessment results are just one of several strategies that Colorado is using to evaluate the impacts of COVID-19 on learning, support effective recovery strategies and create a stronger and more equitable education system.

Results will be used to inform Colorado's ongoing work to support schools and improve educational outcomes for students. Results will provide state leaders with valuable information to help better direct attention and resources to the districts, schools, and focus areas in the most need.

As a result of the pandemic, the state accountability system has been paused for a second year, and spring 2021 assessment results will not be used in teacher evaluations or included in performance frameworks.

## How should families use the assessment results to support their children?

Families will receive an individual report that details their child's performance. The results can provide information about where their child is excelling as well as where they may need more support.

Because spring 2021 tests and expectations were consistent with tests from previous years, results continue to give parents information about what their child knows and can do in relation to the grade-level expectations of the Colorado Academic Standards. The most important information for parents on the report is the performance level and scale score information that provide indicators of their child's learning of the standards.

When the number of participating students meets or exceeds the minimum number needed for reporting, the individual student report will also include summary information about aggregate performance at the school, district, and state levels. Participation rates should be carefully considered when reviewing aggregated performance as participation rates may be too low in some cases to make meaningful interpretations at the school, district or state levels. Parents are encouraged to consider their child's results within the context of the variety of learning disruptions they may have encountered. Families can learn more about state assessments at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/resourcesforparents>.

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## Which state tests were administered in Spring 2021?

The U.S. Department of Education granted Colorado a partial waiver of federal assessment requirements for the spring 2021 assessments due to COVID-19 impacts, approving the assessment of alternating grades for CMAS/CoAlt ELA and math. However, parents could choose to have their children take both the ELA and math assessments. Districts and schools were required to administer the assessments to students whose parents opted them in.

As expected, assessments that were not required had very low participation rates at the state level. Individual student results from the assessments that were not required can provide meaningful feedback about what individual students know and can do in relation to the grade-level expectations; however, interpretations based on aggregated results for the not-required tests should be avoided completely because the incredibly low participation rates do not support valid or meaningful inferences. The following table identifies the assessments that were required and those that were not required to be administered in spring 2021.

GRADE	 ELA CMAS	 MATH CMAS	 SCIENCE CMAS	 PSAT	 SAT
3	REQUIRED	NOT REQUIRED			
4	NOT REQUIRED	REQUIRED			
5	REQUIRED	NOT REQUIRED			
6	NOT REQUIRED	REQUIRED			
7	REQUIRED	NOT REQUIRED			
8	NOT REQUIRED	REQUIRED	REQUIRED		
9				REQUIRED	
10				REQUIRED	
11					REQUIRED*

\*SAT replaced grade 11 CMAS Science as the state's science test for spring 2021 only.

## Where can I view the assessment results?

To view more information about the assessment results after August 12, 2021, visit the following links:

### Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS):

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-dataandresults>

### Colorado PSAT and SAT:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/sat-psat-data>

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