



September 22, 2015

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Many things are changing in Colorado public schools in the areas of state assessments and graduation requirements. Last fall, with the advent of the state-mandated 12th grade Social Studies and Science Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) test, many parents and students let their voices be heard. The Legislature took to heart the protests about too much standardized testing, and they changed the testing environment. Following is a Q and A that will address the many changes for 2015-16:

What changes were made to the time required for students to test?

Fewer instructional days will be needed to take state assessments, fewer test sessions will be required, and the tests themselves are shorter. These are positive changes that will significantly help districts focus their attention on instruction with limited interruptions for state testing.

How are the test results used?

The results of the state tests, Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies, help our teachers and school leaders determine specific areas of focus to best meet student needs. These areas of focus become the basis for building Unified Improvement Plans and strategically guide schools in improving learning for all students. Assessment results help us understand a student's specific areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. We use the individual results to help plan students' curriculum in specific classes. For example, if a student did very well on critical thinking tasks we will include higher level tasks, in his/her classwork. If that same student struggled with comparative writing, we might plan to structure his/her writing instruction differently. These tests also help us predict in ninth grade and tenth grade if a student will be successful on the ACT. We are able to put in to place the coursework that will ultimately help students be successful and college and career ready.

Do these tests have anything to do with the district accreditation rating?

The Littleton Public Schools community places a high value on our performance and district accreditation rating. LPS has earned the state's highest accreditation rating, Accredited with Distinction, for five consecutive years. This rating is based on several measures including student achievement, student growth, growth gaps, graduation rates, dropout rate, and ACT scores. The statewide assessment is a significant component of this rating. The data from these assessments is used for many critical decisions including curriculum design and program evaluation. It also helps schools understand their performance as compared with other schools in the state.

Will 12th Graders have to take state standardized tests?

No. 12th graders are no longer required to take state standardized tests.

How will the state tests work with the new mandated graduation guidelines?

An additional new state law now links successful performance on state assessments with the Board adopted Colorado Academic Standards and demonstration of competency for high school graduation. The goal is to ensure that every high school graduate will succeed after high school no matter what path they choose—workforce, military, or higher education.

This new law goes into effect for the graduating class of 2021. That means this year's 7th graders will be the first to be affected by this legislation. They will have to demonstrate competence in literacy and mathematics through one of several menu options.

Potential competency options could include:

- Earning minimum scores on state and/or national tests
- Passing college-level courses taken during high school
- Earning professional certifications
- Completing a rigorous learning project called a capstone guided by a faculty mentor

Littleton Public Schools is committed to preparing all students for post-secondary options. State testing is one of several measures that help us to do that. We believe that students should take the tests and that the results should be discussed at home as well as at school. These results are one way of helping us help your child.

Please speak with your school principal or feel free to call me if you would like to further discuss these issues.

Very best wishes for a wonderful 2015-16 school year,

Connie Bouwman
Deputy Superintendent