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ABSTRACT

In question-and-answer form, this pamphlet describes the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). The CSAP tests are designed to measure student achievement in relation to the Colorado Model Content Standards. Every student enrolled in the grades tested is expected to take the appropriate CSAP. The CSAP tests are developed collaboratively by the testing contractor and the Colorado Department of Education. Multiple choice questions are machine scored, and open-ended responses are scored by trained certified scorers. The performance levels, which were established by Colorado teachers from across the state, are described. The booklet also explains the consequences for schools of poor student achievement as well as implications of CSAP scores for the individual student. The second section of the pamphlet discusses parents' preparing a child to take the CSAP and stresses that the best preparation for the CSAP is to ensure that the child masters the Colorado Model Content Standards. (SLD)

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A Guide for Parents

"The Colorado Department of Education, the Student Assessment Unit, and Colorado educators are working in partnership with parents to ensure that all children will excel."

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1

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2

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Q&A

What is CSAP?

CSAP stands for Colorado Student Assessment Program. It is a test designed to measure student achievement in relationship to the Colorado Model Content Standards. These standards are expectations specifying what students should know at particular points in their education. As a result, CSAP provides a series of snapshots of student achievement in reading, writing, math, and science as they move through grades 3–10.

Who writes the CSAP assessments?

CSAP is developed collaboratively by the testing contractor and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Teachers, curriculum specialists, and community members from across the state are involved in constructing each new assessment.

How long does the test take?

Each subject area of the CSAP (reading, writing, math and science) takes three testing sessions. Third grade reading and writing are the exception, which take two testing sessions. Testing sessions last about an hour.

Who scores the tests?

Multiple choice questions are machine-scored. The open-ended written responses are scored by well-trained certified scorers. All the scorers have college degrees.

How did the State decide who would be advanced, proficient, partially proficient, or unsatisfactory?

The performance levels were established by Colorado teachers from across the state. Each question/item was discussed in order to specify knowledge, skills, and abilities that students should have to correctly answer the question or item. *A complete examination of this question is available on CDE's website: www.cde.state.co.us.*

Is my child required to take the CSAP?

Yes, every student enrolled in the grades for which there is a CSAP assessment is expected to take it.

My child is a special needs student. Does he/she have to take the CSAP?

Appropriate accommodations are allowed to assist students with special needs in taking the assessment. Each school district determines when it is not appropriate to administer the CSAP to certain students. Students with significant disabilities may have a different level of expectations and would not benefit by taking the CSAP. In Spring 2001, an alternate assessment program (CSAP-A) was available for grade 4 students. Alternate assessments for all other grades will be added in the future.

Can I see or get a copy of the test my child takes?

Before the test—No! Only those involved in developing and giving the test can see it before the students take it.

After the test—Twenty-five percent of the items are released to the public so one can see actual examples of CSAP test questions. A supervised review of the test can be arranged by the Student Assessment Unit, Colorado Department of Education.

My child tells me that the test was too hard and too long. How can that be fair?

All CSAP questions are based on the Colorado Model Content Standards. These standards in turn are a part of schools' curricula. As a result, the skills students need to master to be successful on CSAP should be a part of each student's daily school experiences. One reason some students comment on the difficulty of the test is that CSAP measures high standards which makes it more difficult than many other tests students take.

If my child does not make an effort to do well on his/her test, how does it affect his/her grade?

This decision is made at each school or district. However, no matter what decision the school or district makes, it is important that all students give their best on this test so they can demonstrate what they know and can do.

Why do schools take so much time to get kids ready for and to take the CSAP? Are teachers just teaching to the test and ignoring other important skills and subjects such as social studies, art, music, and physical education?

Because CSAP was designed to assess how well students have met the Colorado Model Content Standards, teachers should be preparing students for CSAP through their everyday curriculum. It is expected that teachers will teach all content areas for which there are state standards. The skills in one subject area, such as reading, are supported by the standards in all other content areas. These content areas include reading, writing, math, science, history, geography, civics, economics, foreign language, music, and physical education. As an example of curriculum integration, while students are reading in any of the content areas such as math, history, or art, they use this information to understand a math problem or to write reports about history or art or to reflect on their learning. This information in turn may be a point for classroom discussions.

I am disappointed that my child scored "Partially Proficient." Does that mean he/she failed the test and is below grade level in that subject?

The Colorado Model Content Standards are rigorous standards. Colorado educators who set the performance levels held very high expectations for all students. Many students who perform at the partially proficient level are demonstrating considerable academic skills and abilities; however, their performance on CSAP was not consistently high enough to meet the CSAP rigorous standards.

What happens with the results of the CSAP? Who gets to see my child's CSAP score?

Results will generate information about how well schools and students are performing statewide, using a common yardstick—the Colorado Model Content Standards. The Colorado Department of Education is required by law to report CSAP results for the state and for all local school districts. Individual student scores are released only to the school and school district. Teachers are encouraged to share this information with each student's parents. School, district, and statewide scores are public records; individual scores are not public records.

Which test is most important: CSAP, Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)/ TerraNova? My child did well on one and not the others. Which tests should we believe in?

The tests should be used in a body of evidence to determine a child's academic achievement. Norm-referenced tests such as the ITBS or TerraNova give parents and teachers an idea about how students compare to other students in the nation. The CSAP evaluates each individual student's knowledge of Colorado Model Content Standards and his/her ability to apply that knowledge.

What are accommodations?

An accommodation allows students to have access to the CSAP without changing the expectations. A student can use an accommodation if he/she has received that same accommodation in class for at least three months. For example, a teacher may read a math problem to a student. The accommodation is allowed for math because the student is not being tested on his/her reading ability. The accommodation is not allowed for reading because the student is being tested on his/her reading ability.

Is CSAP available in Spanish?

The CSAP assessments are available in Spanish for 3rd and 4th grade reading and writing.

What happens if a school does not score well on the CSAP?

According to recent legislation, low-performing schools can obtain assistance from the Colorado Department of Education in the development of a School Improvement Plan. Consistently low-performing schools eventually will be converted to charter schools.

New State Testing Schedule

		Spring 2001	Spring 2002
Grade 3	CSAP Reading CSAP Writing	✓	✓
Grade 4	CSAP Reading CSAP Writing	✓	✓
Grade 5	CSAP Reading CSAP Writing CSAP Math	✓	✓
Grade 6	CSAP Reading CSAP Writing CSAP Math	✓	✓
Grade 7	CSAP Reading CSAP Writing CSAP Math	✓	✓
Grade 8	CSAP Reading CSAP Writing CSAP Math CSAP Science	✓	✓
Grade 9	CSAP Reading CSAP Writing CSAP Math	✓	✓
Grade 10	CSAP Reading CSAP Writing CSAP Math	✓	✓
Grade 11	ACT College Entrance Exam	✓	✓



Preparing Your Child for the CSAP

Information Strategies

- Make sure that you understand why schools give the CSAP and how the information will be used. This pamphlet answers some questions that you may have about the CSAP.
- Find out when the school gives the CSAP so that you can ensure that your child is present for the test.
- Ask whether the school gives students practice in taking the CSAP. If so, be sure that your child participates in these practice sessions.
- Ask your child's teacher for information about activities that you can do at home to help your child learn academic content.

Homework Aids

- When your child has homework, make sure that it gets done.
- Plan a time and a space for your child to study.
- Have your child sit at a table or desk with good light when he/she studies, not in front of the television.
- If your child never or rarely brings work home, find out why. Arrange a meeting with your child's teacher to discuss the homework policy.
- Help your child understand that spacing studying over days or weeks is better preparation than trying to "cram" the night before.

Physical Preparation

- Make sure that your child gets a good rest the nights before the test. Children who are tired are less able to pay attention in class or to handle the demands of the test.

- Feed your child a nourishing breakfast on the mornings of the test. Hunger can detract from good test performance.
- Plan ahead to ensure that your child is present and on time for the test. Do not plan any medical or dental appointments on testing days.

Ask Your Child To:

- Read the directions carefully when the teacher gives out the test.
- Read the questions carefully and all of the answer choices.

Remind Your Child:

- If you don't know an answer to a question, skip it and go on to the next question.
- If there is time at the end of the test, return to the unanswered question.
- It is helpful to eliminate some of the answer choices that you think are wrong.
- It is better to tackle each question one-at-a-time, rather than thinking about the whole test at once.
- If you finish early, check your answers.

The best preparation for the CSAP is to ensure that your child masters the Colorado Model Content Standards on which the test is based.

You can help by:

- Monitoring your child's performance during the year. Ask questions if you don't understand the reasons why your child received a certain grade.
- Obtaining information about the Colorado Model Content Standards. Your child's teacher or guidance counselor can provide you with this information.
- Telling your child that you believe that he/she can do well and succeed in school. Stress that students get good grades by hard work and not just because "some students are smart." Offer praise and encouragement for achievement and improvement.
- Using television wisely. Limit viewing to 2 hours or less on a school night.
- Establishing a daily routine for meals, homework, chores, bedtime, and family talk.



Contributing Agencies:

■ **Colorado Parent Information & Resource Center**

Center for Human Investment Policy
1445 Market Street, Suite 350
Denver, CO 80202
Phone: 303.820.5632
Fax: 303.820.5656
<http://hn4804@handsnet.org>

■ **RMC Research Corporation**

1512 Larimer Street, Suite 540
Denver, CO 80202
Phone: 800.922.3636; Fax: 303.825.1626
<http://www.rmcdenver.com>

■ **Colorado Department of Education**

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Denver, CO 80203
Phone: 303.866.6664
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