

1.0 General Information for Parents and Educators

1.1 Purpose of This Guide

This guide provides information on the individual student performance reports, school reports, and district reports provided for the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) and Colorado Alternate assessment (CoAlt) results. Section 2.0 outlines and explains elements of the individual student report and may be shared with parents and educators to help them understand their students' test results. Sections 3.0 through 8.0 outline and explain elements of the school and district reports.

Please note that the sample reports included in this guide are for illustration purposes only. They are provided to show the basic layout of the reports and the information they provide. Sample reports do not include actual data from any administration.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) and Colorado Alternate Assessments (CoAlt)

The CMAS assessments are Colorado's standards-based assessments designed to measure the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) in the content areas of mathematics, English language arts (ELA), science, and social studies. Eligible English learners in grades 3 and 4 may take the Colorado Spanish Language Arts (CSLA) form as an accommodation in place of an ELA form. A small number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who meet specific criteria may demonstrate their content knowledge on the CoAlt assessments which measure the Extended Evidence Outcomes (EEOs) of the CAS. This guide addresses CoAlt Science assessments specifically. The purpose of the CMAS and CoAlt assessments are to indicate the degree to which students have mastered the expectations of the CAS in each content area at the end of the tested grade level. Results are intended to provide one measure of a student's academic progress relative to the CAS. Results should be taken into consideration alongside other achievement information available locally.

CMAS and CoAlt Science (and Social Studies) assessments were first administered across Colorado in 2013-2014 and CMAS mathematics and ELA assessments were first administered in 2014-2015. CDE requested a partial waiver of federal assessment requirements for the spring 2021 assessments from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) due to COVID-19 conditions in Colorado. The partial waiver solely addressed CMAS/CoAlt English language arts (ELA), Math and Science assessments. The USED approved assessing alternating grades for CMAS/CoAlt ELA and Math. Under the spring 2021 waiver, districts and schools were required to administer CMAS/CoAlt ELA assessments to all students (except those with a parent excusal) in third, fifth, and seventh grades, and CMAS/CoAlt Math to all students (except those with a parent excusal) in fourth, sixth, and eighth grades. Parents could choose to have their children take both the ELA and math assessments. Parents of third, fifth, and seventh graders could opt their students in to CMAS/CoAlt Math and parents of fourth, sixth, and eighth graders could opt their students in to CMAS/CoAlt ELA (see table below). Districts and schools were required to administer these assessments to students whose parents opted them in. CMAS Science was administered in eighth grade only, while CoAlt Science was administered in both eighth and eleventh grades. The waiver included a requirement for all grades and content areas to be publicly reported as long as minimum n size (minimum number of students) and student data privacy requirements are met. These adjustments to testing, along with the suspension of Colorado's social studies assessments, were also made for spring 2021 by the Colorado legislature.

The following table includes the content areas and grade levels that were assessed across Colorado in spring 2021.

Content Area	2021 Required Test	2021 Optional Test	2021 Not Administered
ELA*	Grades 3, 5, 7 (CMAS/CoAlt)	Grades 4, 6, 8 (CMAS/CoAlt)	
Mathematics	Grades 4, 6, 8 (CMAS/CoAlt)	Grades 3, 5, 7 (CMAS/CoAlt)	
Science	Grade 8 (CMAS and CoAlt) High School (CoAlt)		Grade 5 (CMAS and CoAlt) and High School (CMAS)
Social Studies			Grades 4 and 7 (CMAS/CoAlt)

*As a requirement of Colorado School Law C.R.S. §22-7-1006.3 (4) (a) and (b), Spanish-speaking students in grades 3 and 4 who meet established eligibility criteria may take the CSLA form in place of the ELA form of the CMAS assessment.

CMAS Mathematics, ELA, and Science

Available in online and paper format, CMAS assessments were developed by Colorado educators, the Colorado Department of Education, and the testing contractor.

CSLA

Available in paper format, CSLA forms are designed for students with a home language of Spanish who are enrolled in bilingual programs in grades 3 and 4. The CSLA forms serve as accommodated versions of the CMAS ELA assessments. They are parallel and comparable to CMAS ELA in test design, item type, scoring and reporting. Therefore, separate CSLA reports are not included throughout this guide (please refer to ELA reporting information and examples).

1.2.2 Colorado Alternate Assessments (CoAlt) – Additional Information

CoAlt is the standards-based assessment designed specifically for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who, even with accommodations, are unable to participate in CMAS. CoAlt assesses the performance expectations of the EEOs of the CAS and students must meet participation requirements to take the assessments. CoAlt assessments are administered in a one-on-one setting between teachers and students. Teachers use CoAlt scoring rubrics to evaluate student responses before submitting performance results. For each CMAS assessment there is a corresponding CoAlt assessment; however, this guide only includes the CoAlt science assessments. The CoAlt mathematics and ELA assessments were developed by the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) consortium and reports for those assessments are not included in this guide.

1.2.3 COVID-19 Impact on Results - Interpretation Considerations

When interpreting spring 2021 state assessment results, it is important to keep the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the 2020-21 school year in mind.

Unique 2020-21 Learning Experiences – How did COVID-19 impact the school year?

Students experienced various learning disruptions this school year, which may include reduced instructional time, limited access to internet and technology to allow full participation in remote learning, and lack of learning supports such as tutoring and afterschool programming. Students across Colorado learned through a variety of models, including in-person, remote, and hybrid instruction. The leveraged models may have changed, sometimes abruptly and sporadically, across students and across the year. 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.

It is likely the impact of these learning disruptions was uneven within schools and districts, and across the state. Some students, such as students from low-income families or English learners, were likely more impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic due to having access to fewer resources and supports.

Student Performance – What can state assessment results tell you about student learning?

Spring 2021 state tests and expectations were consistent with tests from previous years. Because the scale scores and performance levels retain the same meaning from previous years, results continue to provide information about what individual students know and can do in relation to the grade-level expectations of the CAS. In terms of mastered content, results for students who had a comparatively typical testing experience may be interpreted with relative confidence (i.e., a student's score at a CMAS performance level 4 or 5 may be considered an indicator of mastery of the CAS). The potential impact of test administration conditions on results should be considered on an individual basis for students whose actual testing experiences were significantly different from previous years.

State assessments provide point-in-time snapshots of what individual students know. It is important to take this year’s circumstances and other available information about a student’s learning into consideration when reviewing results and making determinations regarding student learning.

As the only standards-based statewide indicator of student achievement, state assessments were given to provide Colorado parents, educators, and the community with information about student achievement at the end of the 2020-21 school year.

Participation Rates

Some students were able to take tests this school year while others weren’t due to test site limitations, safety concerns, challenges with technology, other interferences, or parental concerns. This means that 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. Thus, some student groups will be overrepresented in the results and others may be underrepresented. Consider the degree to which tested students mirror the state, district and/or school total population. Districts and schools are encouraged to closely review their local participation data when interpreting and comparing aggregated and group results, as participation rates are critical to interpretation and they will vary greatly across the state this year.

Due to these factors and many more challenges experienced during the pandemic, districts/schools may not be able to make direct comparisons within or across years using 2021 assessment data. However, districts/schools can use this year’s results, combined with other data, to identify where the pandemic may have differentially impacted learning across Colorado student groups and as a baseline to support the evaluation of future COVID-19 recovery efforts.

Colorado may use the aggregated information gained from the assessment as an important indicator that will allow the state to better understand the impact of COVID-19 and select, implement and address student learning recovery efforts in the short and long term. The results may be used to help direct COVID-19 related recovery efforts supported by state and federal relief funds.

1.3 Reporting Results

1.3.1 Sharing Results with Parents

As a requirement of Colorado School Law C.R.S. §22-7-1006.3 (8) (a), personnel within the district and school must share with and explain to the parent or legal guardian of each student the student’s state assessment results. When discussing aggregated results with parents, districts and schools are strongly encouraged to closely review their local participation rates as participation rates are critical to interpretation and the spring 2021 participation rates varied greatly across the state.

1.3.2 Confidentiality of Reporting Results

The results of individual student performance on all Colorado assessments are confidential and may be released only in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. Section 1232g). When possible, aggregated student performance data representing 16 or more students is made available to the public. Additional data suppression rules are also applied to aggregated reports to protect student privacy. Aggregated reports do not contain the names of individual students or teachers.