Superintendents or Principals to Parents

*Use this entire article or just portion of it to communicate with parents about the purpose of assessments and the value of participation.*

Our students soon will begin taking the statewide assessments that are aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards and measure real world skills like problem-solving, communicating and thinking critically -- skills essential for success in college and careers. These assessments, called the Colorado Measures of Academic Success tests, examine students’ knowledge in English language arts, math, science and social studies and will be given over a three-week window between April 9 and April 27.

The overall goal is to ensure all students are prepared for college or careers when they leave high school. These tests provide a snapshot of how our students are progressing toward that goal and how our teachers can better help them achieve it. The tests are aligned to the work already being done in the classroom, and the results can help teachers improve or modify their instruction to meet the child’s needs. We’ll get the results of this year’s tests back much sooner so that teachers can put the information to use.

It is also important to remember these tests are just one measure of a student’s progress, but they are the only common measurement that helps parents understand how their children are doing compared with their peers around the state, how the school is performing and how the district is doing overall. Data from the tests also helps policymakers identify what schools or districts need more help and which ones should be celebrated for their successes.

But the information is only good if students take the assessments. In the not-so-distant past, students were graduating without the skills necessary to be prepared for college or careers. Students, parents and educators were shocked at the results or the remedial classes that were necessary to bring college freshmen up to speed.

Current assessments are designed to help reveal how students are progressing toward being prepared for life after high school. But the information won’t be there if students don’t take the tests. In recent years, the state has worked to reduce the number and length of tests for our students in an effort to answer the call from parents who were unhappy about the overload.

This spring, 9th-graders will join 10th-graders in taking the PSAT as the statewide assessment in English language arts and math. Colorado’s 11th-graders will continue taking the SAT as the state’s college entrance exam.

This spring’s tests will inform parents about what their children know, empowering families with knowledge and information to ensure their children get the best education possible. Perhaps the best way to understand what the tests are all about is [to take a practice test](http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmaspracticetest).