



The California Student Assessment System, 2021-22 Overview and Updates

Background

California’s student assessment system has shifted and evolved during the COVID-19 pandemic. With a few exceptions, for the 2021-22 academic year, most assessments will now return to the requirements that were in place prior to the pandemic. This document provides the most up-to-date information on state assessments, including an overview of all components of the state student assessment system and identification of which components are required and which are considered optional by the state. Additionally, parents have the right to “opt out” their children from some state tests (see top of page 5).

California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)

The largest component of the state student assessment system is the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). The CAASPP includes assessments of English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science, and alternate versions of each assessment. These assessments are administered to all eligible students in specific grades annually and are **required for the 2021-22 academic year**. The CAASPP also includes a Spanish language test, which is not required by the state.

<p>Remote Testing for Summative Assessments</p> <p>Remote administration of both the CAASPP and ELPAC will continue to be available for the 2021-22 academic year. Remote administration is intended as an option <u>only</u> when students are receiving remote instruction. Students receiving in-person instruction should be tested in person.</p> <p>All remote test administrations should follow the Test Administration Manual. The Test Administration Manual will contain a new chapter specific to remote testing preparation and administration.</p> <p>Source: CDE Assessment Spotlight, Issue #169</p>

- I. **Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment for ELA/Literacy** – The Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment for ELA/Literacy is aligned with the California Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for [English Language Arts & Literacy](#) and is made up of both Computer Adaptive Tests (CATs) and Performance Tasks (PTs). It is administered every year to all eligible students in grades 3 through 8 and 11.

For the 2020-21 academic year, the State Board of Education (SBE) approved an **adjusted (shorter) blueprint** of the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics that reduced the CAT portion of each test by approximately 50%. At its September 9, 2021, meeting, the SBE voted to continue the use of adjusted (shortened) blueprints for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics for the 2021-22 academic year.

- II. **Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment for Mathematics** – The Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment for Mathematics is aligned with the CCSS for [Mathematics](#) and is made up of both CATs and PTs. It is administered every year to all eligible students in grades 3 through 8 and 11.
- III. **California Science Test (CAST)** – The CAST is aligned with the [California Next Generation Science Standards](#) (CA NGSS) and consists of both discrete questions and PTs. It is administered every year to all eligible students in grades 5, 8, and once in high school.

Beginning with the 2021-22 academic year, the CAST will follow a revised blueprint; students will answer fewer discrete test questions and will respond to a minimum of three PTs.

IV. **California Alternate Assessment (CAA) for ELA/Literacy** – The CAA for ELA/Literacy is administered to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) indicates the use of an alternate assessment. It is aligned with alternate achievement standards – the [Core Content Connectors](#) – and linked to the CCSS for ELA & Literacy. Eligible students take the CAA for ELA/Literacy every year in grades 3 through 8 and 11.

V. **California Alternate Assessment (CAA) for Mathematics** – The CAA for Mathematics is administered to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities whose IEP indicates the use of an alternate assessment. It is aligned with alternate achievement standards – the [Core Content Connectors](#) – and linked to the CCSS for Mathematics. Eligible students take the CAA for Mathematics every year in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11.

VI. **California Alternate Assessment (CAA) for Science** – The CAA for Science is administered to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities whose IEP indicates the use of an alternate assessment. It is aligned with alternate achievement standards – the [Preliminary Science Core Content Connectors and Essential Understandings](#) – and is linked to the CA NGSS. Eligible students take the CAA for Science in grades 5, 8, and once in high school.

Unlike other CAASPP assessments, the CAA for Science is administered during the school year, as close to the time of instruction of the related science content as possible.

VII. **California Spanish Assessment (CSA)** – The CSA is aligned with the [California Common Core State Standards en Español](#) (CCCSeE) and is presented entirely in Spanish. It is part of CAASPP but is not required by the state. It may be administered annually by districts seeking a standardized, norm-referenced tool to assess students' Spanish-specific reading, writing, and listening skills in grades 3 through 8 and high school.

English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC)

A second component of the state student assessment system encompasses the English language proficiency assessments. These include the initial and summative English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) along with the Alternate ELPAC Initial and Summative assessments. ELPAC assessments are administered to all students whose primary language is a language other than English and are **required for the 2021-22 academic year**.

Alternate Assessments and In-Person Testing

Alternate assessments are, by design, one-on-one tests, administered by test examiners who are familiar with the students they are assessing and knowledgeable of accessibility resources and assistive technology supports. Most assistive technologies cannot be provided in a remote testing environment and require in-person support from a test examiner. In addition, testing regulations do not allow parents and guardians to administer or assist in the administration of assessments. Therefore, the CDE requires that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities taking any of the alternate assessments be tested in person.

Source: [CDE Assessment Spotlight, Issues #167](#)

Student Teachers May (in Some Cases) Administer Spring 2022 Assessments

Testing regulations state that CAASPP and ELPAC test examiners must be employees or contractors of the district. Depending on their agreements with student teachers, if student teachers are considered to be employees or contractors, districts may allow them to administer Summative CAASPP tests and/or the Summative ELPAC test during the spring 2022 administration window.

Before student teachers may administer any assessments, the following conditions must be met:

- The student teachers must be appropriately trained.
- The student teachers must sign security affidavits.

The exception to the above is alternate assessments. Student teachers may not administer alternate assessments because they are not certificated and are neither familiar enough with the students they would be assessing nor sufficiently knowledgeable of accessibility resources and assistive technology supports.

Source: [CDE Assessment Spotlight, Issue #171](#)

- I. **Initial ELPAC** – The Initial ELPAC is aligned with the [California English Language Development \(ELD\) Standards](#) and provides information to determine a student’s initial classification as an English learner or as fluent English proficient. It must be administered to all new students, kindergarten (including transitional kindergarten) through grade 12, whose primary language is a language other than English as indicated on the Home Language Survey within 30 calendar days after enrolling in a California public school.

On October 4, 2021, Governor Newsom signed [Executive Order N-18-21](#), which includes a temporary 45-day extension of the 30-day requirement to administer the Initial ELPAC in a number districts impacted by severe wildfires.

- II. **Summative ELPAC** – The Summative ELPAC is aligned with the [CA ELD Standards](#) and assesses four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It provides information on student progress toward English language proficiency and supports decisions regarding student reclassification as fluent English proficient. It must be administered annually to all students in kindergarten (including transitional kindergarten) through grade 12 whose primary language is a language other than English who have not yet been reclassified as fluent English proficient.
- III. **Alternate ELPAC (Initial and Summative)** – The Alternate ELPAC includes both the *Initial Alternate ELPAC* and the *Summative Alternate ELPAC* and is designed for students in kindergarten (including transitional kindergarten) through grade 12 with the most significant cognitive disabilities whose primary language is a language other than English and whose IEP indicates the use of an alternate assessment. It is aligned with the [CA ELD Standards](#) and is intended to provide a consistent alternate measure of English language proficiency across the state.

The Alternate ELPAC is undergoing final field testing during the 2021-22 academic year and will replace all local alternate English language proficiency assessments once operational, estimated to be July 2022 for the *Initial Alternate ELPAC* and January 2023 for the *Summative Alternate ELPAC*.

Physical Fitness Testing (PFT)

The third component of the state student assessment system consists of physical fitness testing (PFT). All students in grades 5, 7 and 9 participate in PFT annually, February through May, using the FITNESSGRAM® assessments. Physical fitness testing is **required for the 2021-22 academic year, with some adjustments**.

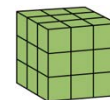
At its January 12, 2022, meeting, the State Board of Education (SBE) voted to modify PFT during the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years to administer the FITNESSGRAM® without the Body Composition Test or calculations of Body Mass Index (BMI). The five remaining areas of PFT are: aerobic capacity; abdominal strength and endurance; upper body strength and endurance; trunk extensor strength and flexibility; and flexibility.

Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics – NOT REQUIRED

The Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics are a **non-required** component of the state student assessment system designed to serve multiple purposes – as practice tests, as teaching tools, as formative assessments, and even as benchmark exams – but they may not be used for evaluation, accountability or any other “high-stakes” decisions ([CA EdCode 60642.7](#)). The only exception to this statute was during the 2020-21 academic year when school districts were permitted to use local assessments and/or the Smarter Balanced Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs) in lieu of the standard Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for end-of-year testing if administration of the standard Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments was unfeasible due to pandemic conditions. This flexibility has ended and, resuming with the 2021-22 academic year, students will be required to take the standard Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments. The prohibition against using interim assessments for high-stakes decisions will also be in effect again.

Three types of interim assessments are available for ELA/Literacy and Mathematics.

1. **Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs)** – ICAs cover the same range of claims, targets, and standards as the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for ELA/Literacy and Mathematics and include the same question types and formats, including PTs. The ICAs are full blueprint tests, equivalent in length to the 2019-20 and prior Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments. Some ICAs questions will be automatically scored by the computer but others, including the PTs, require hand scoring using rubrics.

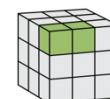


Note that, because the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for ELA/Literacy and Mathematics will use the shorter adjusted blueprints for the 2021-22 academic year, the ICAs are currently almost *twice as long as* the actual summative tests that students will take in 2022, raising questions about the utility and appropriateness of using the ICAs as test prep this year.

2. **Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs)** – IABs are shorter tests that focus on a smaller number of standards and targets than the ICAs, often providing more specific information for instructional purposes. Some IABs are completely computer-scored while others, including the PTs, require hand scoring using rubrics.



3. **Focused IABs** – Focused IABs are new, highly focused IABs that include questions associated with no more than three targets but have approximately the same length and number of items as classic IABs. Some Focused IABs are completely computer-scored while others require hand scoring using rubrics.



Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments may be administered in either standardized or non-standardized modes, allowing teachers to use Interim Assessments as they deem most beneficial. In non-standardized mode, teachers can have students work together or use resources not normally available during the test, and the teacher may provide assistance or even walk students through a test question-by-question. Students may take each individual Interim Assessments test multiple times, but there is no variation or “computer adaption,” so students would see the same questions each time.

While it is permissible for schools and districts to use Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments as local benchmark assessments, chapters should support teachers in resisting district efforts to impose top-down, mandated uses of Interim Assessments (especially ICAs, which are inappropriate for most purposes at this time). Interim Assessments can be a useful tool when used correctly and judiciously, but classroom teachers should be at the center of any decision-making processes about frequency and conditions of administration and use of results. Finally, chapters should be aware of workload issues arising from the need to hand-score many Interim Assessments.

Tools for Teachers – NOT REQUIRED

The [Tools for Teachers](#) website is the optional, formative assessment component of the Smarter Balanced assessment platform. It is an online collection of resources aligned with the CCSS designed to support teachers in their use of formative assessment in the classroom. Tools for Teachers features standards-aligned lesson plans with formative assessment and accessibility strategies embedded in every lesson and interactive “playlists” of lessons linked to and from the Smarter Balanced interim assessments. Use of Tools for Teachers is not required by the state.

For more information on the California student assessment system, see the following two documents from the California Department of Education (CDE):

[California Assessment System Overview](#)

[California Assessment System Timeline](#)

Opting Out of State Testing

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) recognizes a parent’s right to opt out of some testing. California EdCode [60615](#) allows a parent or guardian to submit a written request to school officials to exclude their child from the CAASPP. The general opt-out provision of EdCode [60615](#) does not, however, apply to PFT. There are a limited number of state-recognized justifications for not participating in physical fitness testing (medical excuses, certain disabilities, etc.), but most students will not be excused from PFT. Likewise, parents/guardians may not opt their child out of ELPAC testing because federal law (Titles I and III of ESSA) requires that all students whose primary language is a language other than English be assessed for English language proficiency every year.

California regulations allow educators to inform parents/guardians of their right to opt their child out of CAASPP testing but prohibits educators from soliciting or encouraging parents/guardians to do so. [Section 852\(c\) of Title 5](#) of the California Code of Regulations provides that: “An LEA (local education agency) and its employees may discuss the CAASPP assessment system with parents and may inform parents of the availability of exemptions under Education Code section 60615. The LEA and its employees shall not solicit or encourage any written exemption request on behalf of any child or group of children.”

For more resources for educators and parents, see: <https://www.cta.org/our-advocacy/opt-out-of-standardized-testing>

Bargaining Implications

Educators and parents are increasingly concerned about over-testing. Although administering assessments and tests are part of the core duties of educators and the right to assign work is a management right, there are avenues locals can pursue to push back against over-testing.

1. **Workload Bargaining** – Workload is a mandatory subject of bargaining. In some circumstances, tests or assessments may suddenly increase unit members workload, particularly assessments that require hand scoring. Even if the assessment is required by statute, locals have the right to bargain the impact and effects of the assessment on mandatory subjects of bargaining, such as workload.
2. **Right to Consult** – Under the EERA, the exclusive representative of certificated employees has the right to consult on curriculum, educational objectives, and textbooks. Locals should exercise their right to consult to influence and shape the testing regimen for non-required tests and assessments. For example, the local and the district could bargain the creation of a joint labor-management committee to consult on the district’s assessment plan. For further information on the right to consult, please see the C4OB Advisory *2013-07-01 Local Control and Common Core*.

Questions about the right to bargain or the right to consult in the context of assessments and testing should be directed to CTA primary contact staff.