

E-Newsletter

Show What You Know® Publishing

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Letter from the President

Dear Educators and Parents,

Did you hear the news? We are taking our successful test-preparation program national and will release a full line of *Show What You Know® on the Common Core* workbooks in the fall 2011! As states are transitioning from their own state standards to the Common Core State Standards, *Show What You Know® on the Common Core* workbooks will provide schools with a diagnostic tool to test students' knowledge with the new national standards.



We continue to be your source for helping students to achieve their best on state standardized tests. All of our materials focus on increasing test-taking skills and reducing test anxiety. Dr. Jolie Brams has been an author and a consultant on all of our test-preparation programs. Her expertise on test anxiety and ways to combat test stress are in every test-preparation book we produce. Because of her contributions, we stand out as a different kind of test-preparation company. We don't encourage "teaching to the test," but instead, we offer research-based tools, techniques, and learnable test-taking skills for test success.

I hope you enjoy this issue of our E-newsletter. Have a great summer!

Cindi Englefield
CEO and President



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Classrooms try out Common Core State Standards

While some scholars, bloggers, and activists debate whether a “common” curriculum is best for U.S. students, schools in New York City, Boston, Cleveland, and Philadelphia have reportedly begun to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) into their classroom instruction, putting into practice performance tasks, analytical thinking, and other teaching techniques that are prevalent in the new national core standards.



The CCSS provide guidelines to districts, schools, and teachers for what students are expected to know and be able to do by the end of each grade level. However, the standards allow educators to choose how to teach and what to teach their students so that teaching can be customized to each classroom’s needs.

Forty-two states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have adopted the CCSS. Additionally, Minnesota chose to adopt only the English language arts core standards, and Washington has provisionally adopted the national core standards pending a review that compares the CCSS to its current state standards.

States have been left to develop their own transition plans, moving from their current state standards and assessment systems to new assessments for the CCSS. Still some districts have chosen to lead by example and have taken responsibility for creating their own vision of CCSS implementation—putting the new core standards into practice in the classroom for the first time.

Thus far, there are no accountability requirements or measurements for the CCSS. Schools choosing to use CCSS in their classrooms must measure student progress in self-created ways. But as lawmakers work to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) this year, new accountability requirements will surely be addressed.

Two groups, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), have been working to create new assessment systems for the CCSS by the 2014–2015 school year. Most states that adopted the core standards are planning to transition to the new CCSS in English language arts and mathematics by this 2014–2015 deadline.

Check your state’s department of education website for more information on its plan to transition to the CCSS.



5 steps toward Common Core

A majority of states have already begun the transition process toward full implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Here's a list of steps you can take to prepare for the CCSS:

- 1) Read the Common Core State Standards and become familiar with its structure, its goals, and the new teaching strategies it may bring to your lessons
- 2) Use state-created “crosswalk” materials to see how your current state standards and curriculum compares to the new CCSS; In addition, take advantage of professional development offered by your state to learn more about implementing the CCSS in your classroom
- 3) Form a plan with your school and/or district for transitioning to teaching the new CCSS so that students are prepared to take Common Core assessments in 2014–2015 (Or earlier! Check your state department of education website.)
- 4) Develop a vision for teaching the CCSS—What does teaching the CCSS look like in your school and in your classroom?
- 5) The Common Core State Standards currently assess only students' English language arts and mathematics knowledge and skills in grades K–12. If your state tests students annually on other subjects, like science, social studies and writing, check to see if these standards and tests will remain in place, be revised, or be removed during the transition

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Governor's office clears rumors of dropping tests

Colorado News

After circulation of rumors that lawmakers were crafting a bill that would cut back on state testing, the Colorado Governor's Legislative Director Christine Scanlan told education lobbyists on May 3 that the administration won't be pushing for a bill this year.

The governor's office had been considering substituting a national test, like the Accuplacer, for the 9th and 10th grade CSAP assessments, but the idea reportedly received a cool reception from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and other interest groups.

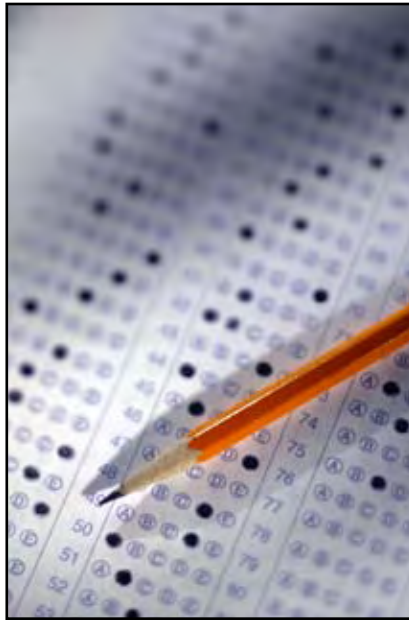
Democratic Rep. Judith Solano was advocating drafting a bill that would reduce the Colorado assessment system to nearly the minimum tests required by the federal No Child Left Behind Law. The bill would have eliminated writing tests at all grade levels, but according to the governor's office, House leadership won't give Solano late-bill status for the measure.

Cutting back on state testing would have meant a significant cut to the nearly \$20 million spent each year giving students in grades 3–11 standardized tests for reading, mathematics, writing, and science. This year, with schools facing dramatic budget cuts that could likely force teacher layoffs and even the closure of some schools, lawmakers were more willing make cuts to state testing to save schools from making cuts elsewhere.

In the past, Solano has introduced several unsuccessful bills to reduce the scope of the state assessment system. But Colorado lawmakers

and the CDE have held firm to keeping the state assessment system intact.

Traditionally, the CDE has had reservations about making any large changes to the state assessment system because it would require filling out paperwork with the federal government and force adjustments to the Colorado Growth Model, which relies on multiple years of test scores to track student growth.



Next year, the CSAP will be replaced with tests called the Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP). The TCAP assessments will be a stepping-stone to a new Colorado assessment system in 2014. The tests contain assessment items that are common to both the former Colorado Model Content Standards and the newly adopted Colorado Academic Standards.

According to the CDE, the TCAP will maintain the same general structure as the CSAP, including content distribution. It will assess students' knowledge of mathematics, reading, and writing in grades 3–10, as well as science in grades 5, 8 and 10.



For more information about state testing, visit the CDE website:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/>

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Transition to FCAT 2.0 tests to be complete next year

Florida News

The transition to FCAT 2.0 assessments will be complete next spring when students are tested on FCAT 2.0 science assessments in grades 5 and 8.

This year, students were tested on FCAT 2.0 reading tests in grades 3–10, FCAT 2.0 mathematics tests in grades 3–8, and science 2.0 questions were field tested. FCAT 2.0 assessments measure student achievement on the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.

The scores from the spring 2011 FCAT 2.0 assessments will be reported using the existing FCAT scale as FCAT Equivalent Scores. According to the Florida Department of Education, the scores will be reported this way to maintain consistent student expectations during the transition year.

This fall, Florida educators will be asked to recommend new achievement-level cut scores for the FCAT 2.0 reading and mathematics assessments.

Currently, students in grade 3 must achieve an FCAT Equivalent Score at Level 2 or higher in reading, or show good cause, to be eligible for promotion. Students in grade 10 who entered grade 9 in the 2009–2010 school year must score 1926 FCAT Equivalent Score or above in reading to be eligible for graduation. (The FCAT equivalent scale ranges from 86 to 3008 across grades 3–10.) To be considered on grade level, students must achieve Level 3 or higher. The new cut scores will establish the minimum scores required by Achievement Level for each grade and subject.

The State Board of Education will approve the final FCAT 2.0 Achievement Levels in January

2012 based on the recommendations of educators. More information about the FCAT 2.0 transition is available at <http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcat2/>.

See our FCAT 2.0 books and flash cards at <http://www.passthefcats.com/>!



Ongoing transition to FCAT 2.0, EOC computer-based tests

The following tests will be administered by computer for all students except for accommodations:

2011–2012

FCAT Mathematics retakes, all grades
FCAT Mathematics, grade 10
FCAT 2.0 Reading, grade 7
EOC Algebra I
EOC Geometry
EOC Biology I

2012–2013

FCAT Mathematics retakes, all grades
FCAT 2.0 Reading, grades 7 and 10
FCAT 2.0 Mathematics, grade 7
EOC Algebra I
EOC Geometry
EOC Biology I
EOC US History

2013–2014

FCAT 2.0 Reading, grades 5, 7, and 10
FCAT 2.0 Mathematics, grades 6 and 7
EOC Algebra I
EOC Geometry
EOC Biology I
EOC US History
EOC Civics

Resources for new Ohio Model Curriculum available online

Ohio News

Prior to the adoption of the Ohio Model Curriculum for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies on March 15 by State Board of Education, teachers across Ohio worked together in teams to shape the instructional strategies and resources that will align to Ohio's revised standards.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) is working to turn the Ohio Model Curriculum into a web-based tool for educators. Crosswalk documents that help educators transition from the 2002 Ohio Academic Content Standards to the newly revised standards are now available online. And the ODE plans to create professional development and information resources, including tools and strategies to share with districts to help

them make the curriculum transition by 2014–2015. During the 2014–2015 school year, students will be tested on the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics, as well as the revised Ohio Academic Content Standards in science and social studies.

In addition to creating web-based resources, the ODE held events on April 8 and April 11 to begin collaborative planning and discuss the stages outlined in the transition roadmap that will lead to the full implementation of the Ohio Model Curriculum and the assessment of the newly revised and adopted standards. The ODE invited two representatives from all 57 Ohio Educational Service Centers (ESC) to the event on April 8. For districts that do not have contracts with ESCs, the ODE held another session on April 11.



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STAAR™ assessment system to begin spring 2012

Texas News

Next school year, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR™) will replace the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). STAAR™ includes 12 end-of-course (EOC) exams and new grade 3–8 assessments.

According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), STAAR™ is a more rigorous assessment program that will provide the foundation for a new accountability system for Texas public education. The STAAR™ program for grades 3–8 will assess the same subjects and grade levels that are assessed by the TAKS. However, in high school, grade-specific assessments will be replaced with 12 end-of-course (EOC) assessments: Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, biology, chemistry, physics, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history and U.S. history.

The TEA is establishing a 4-hour time limit for both the STAAR™ EOC assessments and the STAAR™ grades 3–8 assessments for the 2012 spring administration. Extended time accommodations for students with unique learning needs will continue to be offered. After the spring 2012 test administration, the TEA will examine the 4-hour time limit to see if it needs to be reconsidered or adjusted for specific grades or subjects—in particular, the English I, II and III EOC assessments that include writing sections.

Performance standards for the STAAR™ in grades 3–8 will be set in fall 2012 so that only raw scores will be reported following the spring 2012 test administration. This means the Student Success Initiative (SSI) promotion requirements will not include STAAR™ results from the



2011–2012 school year. Districts will use other relevant academic information to make promotion decisions, such as teacher recommendations and student grades. Additionally, STAAR™ grades 3–8 assessment result reports will be delayed until fall 2012.

The STAAR™ assessments for grades 3–8 will be taken by paper-and-pencil only; STAAR™ EOC assessments will be offered in online and paper formats. STAAR™ assessments in Spanish will be available for students in grades 3–5.

Students will be allowed to use dictionaries and calculators with some tests. Dictionaries will be provided to students taking STAAR™ reading assessments in grades 6–8, STAAR™ writing assessments at grade 7, and STAAR™ English I, II and III EOC assessments. Calculators will be allowed for all students taking STAAR™ Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II, chemistry, physics, and biology assessments.

Continued on Page 8

STAAR™ assessment system to begin spring 2012

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A new accountability system for the STAAR™ will be developed during the 2011–2012 school year and be phased in during the 2012–2013 school year. In the new accountability system:

- Student performance will be measured against both student passing standards and college-readiness standards;
- Student progress will also be a factor, which will allow more students to be identified as meeting or progressing toward meeting the standards;
- College-ready performance indicators will increase so that by 2019–2020 Texas ranks in the top ten among states nationally on two measures, 1) the percent of college-ready students and 2) the percent of students graduating under the recommended or advanced high school program with no gaps by race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status;
- Dropout rates for grades 9–12 and high school graduation rates will be recorded;
- Student group performance based on race or ethnicity and socioeconomic status will be evaluated;
- Schools will report Required Improvement over the prior year and Average Performance over the last three years;
- Accountability rating labels will be used to assign districts and campuses to one of two rating categories: “Unacceptable” and “Acceptable”; and
- Campus distinction designations will be awarded to campuses in the top 25 percent in annual improvement, campuses in the top 25 percent for those demonstrating the ability to close performance gaps, and for academic performance in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies, as well as fine arts, physical education, 21st Century workforce development programs, and second language acquisition programs.



STAAR™ resources, including assessment attributes, assessed curriculum documents, test blueprints, and (in fall 2011) STAAR™ sample items, will be posted on the resources page. Go to the STAAR™ web page:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar>

More information about the transition to the STAAR™ assessment program is on the HB 3 Transition Plan page:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/hb3plan/>

Most students to take state tests online next school year

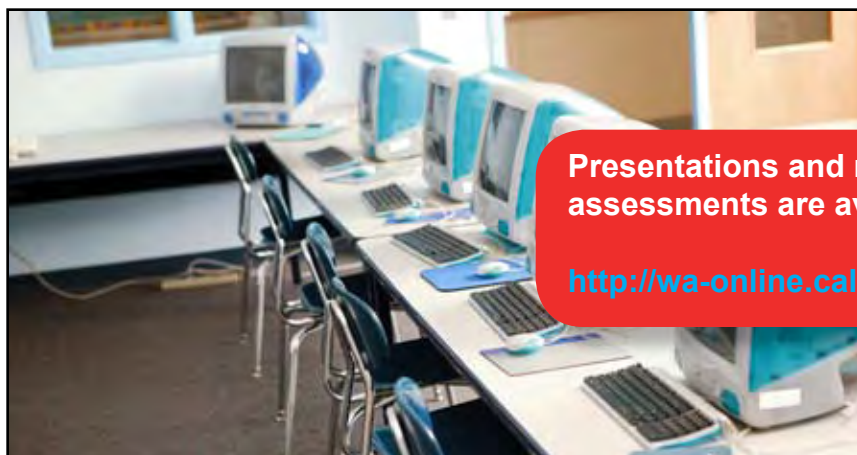
Washington News

According to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the majority of students in grades 4 through high school will be taking their state standardized assessments online next school year.

This year, students in grades 4–8 were offered online tests in reading and mathematics and students in grade 5 and grade 8 were offered online tests for science. Next school year, grade 7 students will have the option to take their writing test online, but grade 4 writing will remain a paper-and-pencil assessment.

For now, Grade 3 will remain a paper-and-pencil test. And paper-and-pencil testing will always be an option for students with special needs.

The testing window for online assessment this year is from May 2 to June 3. The window is larger than the timeline for paper-and-pencil testing so that schools can ensure all students will have a testing opportunity in the classroom or the computer lab. Schools will need to contact their school assessment coordinator to see if it is participating in online testing this year.



Presentations and manuals for administering online MSP assessments are available online at:

<http://wa-online.caltesting.org/documentation/index.html>



Dorn's math bill signed into law

Washington School Superintendent Randy Dorn helped draft a Math bill that was signed into law on April 11. The law provides a smoother transition from HSPE math assessments to end-of-course (EOC) assessments by allowing students in the classes of 2013 and 2014 to pass only one math EOC exam instead of two.

Students in the class of 2015 and beyond must pass two EOC exams to be eligible for graduation. Students in the classes of 2011 and 2012 can meet the assessment graduation requirement by passing one state math exam or by earning two credits of math after grade 10.



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