

PARENT/GUARDIAN'S GUIDE TO THE CALIFORNIA ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS

"The Decision To Participate" ("What is the right test for my child?")

Which test(s) should my child take?

As a member of the individualized education program (IEP) team, making a decision about which test will best meet your child's needs can be hard. There are many things to think about in making that choice. The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) System provides four basic statewide assessments:

- Smarter Balanced assessments for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics in grades three through eight and grade eleven, provide an assessment for approximately 99 percent of the student population, including most students with an IEP
- California Alternate Assessments (CAAs) for ELA and mathematics, which are for students with significant cognitive disabilities and provide an assessment for approximately 1 percent of the student population
- Science assessments (including both modified and alternate assessments for students with an IEP) in grades five, eight, and ten
- Standards-based Tests in Spanish (an OPTIONAL assessment in grades three through eleven)

A student identified to take an alternate assessment must take all assessments (ELA, mathematics, and science) for that grade level. These assessments are given once each year to students and can be taken with accommodations and supports to improve accessibility.

Who is a student with a significant cognitive disability?

This decision is made by the IEP team, and is not just the identification of a specific disability. The team should talk about the child's ability to live independently and to function safely in daily life. An IQ score alone does not determine a significant cognitive disability; rather, an **overall understanding of the student is required** to make the determination. The team should review your student's work, school records, and important information across several school years and settings (e.g., school, home, community), and then decide whether your student fits the criteria for an alternate assessment.

What should the IEP team consider?

The IEP team should consider the following information to determine whether the CAAs or the Smarter Balanced assessments are appropriate for a particular student:

- The student's curriculum and instruction, including data on progress
- Classroom work samples and information
- Examples of performance on assessments to compare with classroom work

- Results of districtwide assessments
- Results of individualized reading assessments
- IEP information from multiple sources, including:
 - ✓ Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, IEP goals, and short-term objectives
 - ✓ Needs of a student with substantial communication issues
 - ✓ Needs of a student who may be learning English as a second or other language (i.e., an English learner), which may interfere with an accurate assessment of his or her abilities