

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 Summative 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 the most significant cognitive disabilities and provide an assessment for approximately 1 percent of the student population
- Science assessments include both the California Science Test (CAST) and the California Alternate Assessment for Science for students with an IEP designating an alternate assessment. Students take the assessment in grades five and eight, and once in high school. All grade twelve students must take the pilot test this year. Students in grades ten and eleven, who have completed their last Science class, may also take the test if the district elects to administer the test at those grade levels.
- Standards-based Tests in Spanish (STS) for Reading/language arts (an OPTIONAL assessment in grades two through eleven); the STS will be an online test in 2018, and will transition to the new California Spanish Assessment (CSA) in 2019.

A student identified to take an alternate assessment must take all assessments (ELA, mathematics, and science) for that grade level. These assessments are given annually 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. A consideration of the student's adaptive behavior is critical in identifying the need for alternate assessment. Adaptive behavior is the collection of conceptual, social, and practical skills that are learned and performed by people in their everyday lives.

- Conceptual skills—language and literacy; money, time, and number concepts; and self-direction.
- Social skills—interpersonal skills, social responsibility, self-esteem, gullibility, naïveté (i.e., wariness), social problem solving, and the ability to follow rules/obey laws and to avoid being victimized.

- Practical skills—activities of daily living (personal care), occupational skills, healthcare, travel/transportation, schedules/routines, safety, use of money, use of the telephone.

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 Smarter Balanced and CAST, or CAA assessments are appropriate for a particular student. When the IEP team decides the student should take alternate assessments, **all** assessments (English language arts, math, and science) will be given in the alternate version.

- 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 district wide 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