



## **Vermont Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) and the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)**

### **Understanding the CAS and NECAP**

Vermont students take a variety of tests during their school years. Teachers develop all forms of assessments - they use portfolios for authentic assessments, norm-referenced tests for ranking purposes, locally developed assessments for local proficiencies and standardized tests that are required by law.

The New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) was designed in partnership with Rhode Island, New Hampshire and most recently Maine, to serve as the required assessment program as mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act. The assessments are aligned to the Grade Level/Grade Span Expectations (GLE's/GSE's) that provide a curricular framework for teaching and learning. The learning objectives in the GLE's/GSE's serve as the benchmarks for the NECAP assessment.

Students take the NECAP assessments in Reading and Mathematics in grades 3-8 and again in 11<sup>th</sup>. These assessments are given in October; they are meant to measure learning to that point in the student's education, not to test the material taught during that school year.

The Science Assessment is given to students in 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades in October; the Writing assessment is given to students in 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades in May. Some schools offer these assessments in a computer based format. For students who require testing accommodations per an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) those are provided. Additionally, for students with more severe disabilities there are alternate or modified assessments.

The assessments serve many purposes: they monitor students' progress throughout their education, identify areas of strength and weakness in academic performance, determine content areas where there needs an increased instructional focus and to monitor schools progress at helping all students achieve proficiency in the academic subjects. One goal of the No Child Left Behind Act is that 100% of students score proficiently on the assessments given in these core subjects.

Over the coming years, Vermont will move towards implementation of the Common Core Standards; this will also cause a shift in the assessments used in the schools. Working with other states who are adopting the Common Core Standards, Vermont will be participating in the development of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium. The Vermont Department of Education is eliciting feedback on this process from the public as well.

### **Format of the CAS and NECAP**

The NECAP Assessment in Reading and Mathematics for students in grades 3 and 4 has a multiple-choice and constructed-response format exam. The NECAP in Reading and Mathematics for grades 5-8 has multiple-choice, constructed-response and written answers expected. The Science Assessment given to 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders asks questions in multiple-choice and constructed-response styles.

The high school level NECAP in Reading, Writing and Mathematics asks questions in multiple-choice and constructed-response formats. The Writing Assessment asks students to provide a full essay response. The Science Assessment asks only multiple-choice and constructed response questions.

Other assessments that a teacher may give in Vermont could be formative, summative, norm-referenced, criterion-referenced or authentic. As there are a number of types of assessments given, there are a number of different reasons for each style of test. A formative assessment tells educators what knowledge

and skills a student possesses before teaching begins. A summative assessment measures a student's proficiency on material that has been recently taught.

A norm-referenced assessment places a student within a "norm" population to see where he or she ranks. A criterion-referenced exam is based very specifically on the criterion (learning objectives) that was taught, as in a NECAP style test that is referenced to Grade Level Expectations. An authentic assessment is more of a performance based style assessment that allows the student to showcase what they know and can do. The results a student may receive could be on a scale, a device that provides rankings, a rubric that offers a holistic or analytic score and on proficiency levels. Results delivered from these style assessments will provide guidance on the scale scores and proficiency levels related to that assessment.

## **Taking the CAS and NECAP**

Assessments in Vermont are aligned to the learning plan laid out in the Vermont Frameworks. All teaching and learning is encompassed by the frameworks, and the planning and preparation for any assessment is served by understanding what is expected for students.

The areas where learning skills are developed for are: Communication, Reasoning & Problem Solving, Personal Development, Civic and Social Responsibility, Arts, Language and Literature, History and Society Sciences, and Science Mathematics, and Technology.

In the assessed subjects, an understanding of the sub-skills required for proficiency can help a student identify strengths and weaknesses in their own learning. In the area of Arts, Language and Literature, critical response, literature and media, the English language, non-native language (speaking/listening, reading, writing), artistic process and elements forms and techniques are the sub-skills students need to master.

In Science, Mathematics and Technology, students are expected to become proficient in these following sub-topics: inquiry, experimentation and theory, mathematical understanding and reasoning, systems, space, time and matter, the living world/universe/earth/environment, and design and technology.

In History and Social Sciences, students need to gain knowledge in the areas of history, geography, citizenship, diversity and unity, economics, conflicts and conflict resolution, identity and interdependence, and investigation and critical evaluation.

With the development of the sub-skills comes mastery of the topic. All the assessments given look for students to show proficiency across the subject matter; the framework provides a useful tool for understanding areas that need a student's attention.

## **Get Your Child Ready for NECAP and CAS State Testing**

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