



Washington DC Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS)

Understanding the DC Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS)

Students in the public schools of Washington DC are required to participate in the DC Comprehensive Assessment Systems tests of Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Science and Biology. These tests begin for students in grade 3 and continue through grade 8. Students are then required to take the assessments again during high school.

The tests are not high-stakes in that they will not affect graduation requirements or whether a student will be promoted to the next grade. These assessments are measurements of student progress at reaching the learning objectives and standards laid out in core academic subjects.

The results can be used in a variety of ways. Students are able to recognize areas of proficiency and see where they need to work on improving their abilities. Teachers will be able to devise instructional strategies for individual students and whole classes based on the assessment results. When students are under-performing teachers and families can use the results of the assessments to focus in on creating a plan for remedial work.

These assessments also contribute to measuring adequate yearly progress (AYP) that schools need to make. Student scores will be reported at proficiency levels, and the expectation is that all students be able to perform proficiently in reading and mathematics. One tenet of the No Child Left Behind Act is that 100% of students have reached proficiency in these areas by 2014.

The curriculum that is used in the Washington DC schools provides for specific skills and knowledge to be gained in each subject matter; the DC CAS assessments are aligned to these skills and knowledge and provide a valid report on student achievement.

Four times throughout the school year students will also take assessments called the DC Benchmark Assessments (DC BAS) that monitor student success in achieving proficiency on the teaching and learning occurring. These tests are used as an instructional device in terms of planning and recognizing areas of strength and weakness.

Format of the DC Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS)

The DC Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS) Tests are given during a two week testing window in April. The tests are usually given between 9 am and 12 pm during the testing period.

Students in grades 3-8 and 10 take the DC CAS in Reading and Mathematics. Students in grades 4, 7 and 10 will also take a DC CAS in Writing. Students in grades 5 and 8 will take the DC CAS in Science. High school students taking biology will take a DC CAS in Biology.

The DC Benchmark Assessments (DC BAS) occur on a quarterly basis in the above subjects and grade levels.

For all students who require testing accommodations, those are provided based on the requirements of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a Section 504. There is also an Alternate Assessment for students with more severe cognitive disabilities.

Taking the DC Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS)

When students take the DC CAS Tests they are being assessed on specific topics within the broad subject area. The curriculum organizes the subjects in the following manner:

Reading/Language Arts – students must show proficiency in language development, understanding of informational and literary texts, the research process, the writing process, media literacy and language conventions.

Mathematics – students need to demonstrate proficiency in number sense and operations, patterns, relationships and algebra, geometry, measurement, and data analysis, statistics and probability.

In Science – students need to show understanding of scientific thinking processes, science and technology, the solar system, heat/thermal energy, weather and climate, earth and life history, resources and cycles.

Students will receive results that provide a proficiency level report. There are four proficiency levels that a student may achieve in each subject: Advanced, Proficient, Basic and Below Basic. These results do not factor into report card grades; they are performance indicators meant to measure what students know and can do and the educational progress being made.

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