



Alaska Comprehensive System of Student Assessment (CSSA)

Understanding the Alaska Comprehensive System of Student Assessment (CSSA)

In Alaska students are assessed throughout the course of their education based on local, state and federal requirements. The No Child Left Behind Act calls for testing of students in Literacy and Math in grades 3-8 and again in high school. These assessments serve a number of purposes: they monitor student progress, highlight areas of instructional strength and weakness, and they represent the progress schools are making at teaching all students up to the standards laid out in the state's curriculum.

The Alaska Comprehensive System of Student Assessment (CSSA) is the overall term used for the system by which students are assessed. It is comprised of a number of tests that students will take during their school years; not all of which are intended to measure proficiency in the subject matter. Some of the assessments are diagnostic in nature and will help teachers plan for instruction. However, there are a core of assessments that are aligned to state teaching and learning standards that will require students to demonstrate proficiency in the subject areas.

In grades 3-8 students take Standards Based Assessments (SBA's) in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. These tests fulfill state and federal requirements for assessing students in these core subjects. Additionally, students take a Standards Based Assessment in Science in grades 4 and 8, then again in high school. These assessments are given in April.

In high school students take the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination (HSGQE) in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. In 10th grade students also take a Science Standards Based Assessment (SBA). These assessments are also given in April.

New assessments are also being introduced. The TerraNova Norm-Referenced Test is given to 5th and 7th graders in February; this is a norm-referenced test that shows how a student ranks on a national percentile in the core subject areas. Students in high school are now also taking the WorkKeys® Assessment in the Fall; this assessment is geared towards recognizing what career and college readiness skills students have.

Taking the Alaska Comprehensive System of Student Assessment (CSSA)

In grades 3-8 students take the Standards Based Assessments (SBA's) in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. This assessment asks questions in multiple-choice, short-response and extended-response formats. Additionally, there is a writing prompt that calls for higher level critical writing.

The Science Standards Based Assessment given to students in 4th, 8th and 10th also requires students to respond in multiple-choice, short-response and extended-response formats.

The High School Graduation Qualifying Examination (HSGQE) in Reading, Writing and Mathematics gives students multiple-choice, short-response and extended-response questions. For all the assessments, the constructed responses are scored by trained professionals.

The Terra-Nova Assessment and WorkKeys® use multiple-choice and constructed-response formats. Some of the assessments are given on the computer and others in a paper-and-pencil based formats; these decisions ultimately lie with the district.

For students with disabilities who require testing accommodations per their Individualized Education Plan, those are available. There is also a system of alternate assessments for students with severe disabilities.

Format of the Alaska Comprehensive System of Student Assessment (CSSA)

The questions that appear on the Standards Based Assessments (SBA's) and the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination (HSGQE) reflect the design of the curriculum. The Alaska Standards were established as a series of guidelines on how to organize each subject matter and teach the core components so that all students achieve the expected standards and objectives of learning.

In Mathematics, students are expected to gain proficiency in the areas of: number theory and operations, measurement, estimation, computation, number patterns, functions and relationships, solving equations, geometry, organizing and analyzing data, and probability.

In Reading students will learn a variety of literacy skills: vocabulary development, literal and inferred meaning, summarizing information, recognizing main ideas, following written directions, analyzing literary and informational content/structure/elements, differentiating fact and opinion, and connecting themes and ideas.

The learning objectives in Writing are that students will be able to maintain focus, write for different purposes, and edit using Standard English correctly.

Students taking the Science Assessment will be assessed in the following areas: inquiry, technology, nature of science, physical science, life science, and earth science.

On the assessments students receive scores on a scale and on a proficiency level. The scale score is derived from the number of correct answers, the level of difficulty of the correct and incorrect questions, and the total number of questions. The scores are tied to a scale for proficiency levels. 'Cut Scores' are the number where one level moves to the next. Students who score on the lower levels of the proficiency scale will likely need some remedial instruction; the areas in which that is necessary can be seen on the results of the assessment.

Get Your Child Ready for Alaska Testing

SchoolTutoring's Alaska State Test Prep programs start with a free academic assessment with an Academic Director. Our flagship tutoring program is available for \$179.99/month which includes regular one-on-one tutoring, academic mentorship, bi-monthly progress reports, learning profiles, and parental conference calls. To learn more visit SchoolTutoring.com.