



# PARENTS' GUIDE TO NEW ASSESSMENTS IN HAWAII

In school year (SY) 2011–12, Hawaii began implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in grades K–2, 11–12, and in Algebra II classes. Beginning in SY 2013–14, Hawaii is implementing the CCSS in the remaining grades in K–12. The CCSS provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn in English language arts/literacy and mathematics as they progress from grade to grade.

In the SY 2014–15, Hawaii will transition to a new statewide assessment system to measure student achievement on the CCSS. The new assessments will be used to gauge how well students are mastering the standards—and ultimately how ready students are for college and career education and training. In spring 2014, some schools will participate in a field test to try out the new assessments to ensure a smooth rollout in the 2014–2015 school year. These new CCSS-aligned assessments will replace the current Hawaii State Assessments (HSA) for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.

## WHAT ARE THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS (CCSS)?

The Common Core State Standards define the learning expectations that students are expected to achieve at each grade level in ELA and mathematics. The CCSS are designed to enhance and improve student learning by providing greater clarity and rigor than previous standards. The learning expectations emphasize the use of relevant situations so students are able to apply their knowledge to the real world, giving them the knowledge and skills they need to be prepared for college and career success. The standards are also robust, ensuring a future U.S. workforce that can compete in the global economy.

The new standards emphasize fewer topics and stress not only rote skills but also conceptual and critical thinking. The CCSS build knowledge from grade to grade, enabling students to develop expertise with important concepts as they progress through grades K–12.

**The standards are not a curriculum.** Decisions about curriculum, tools, materials, and textbooks are left to local districts and schools that know their students best.

The CCSS were developed through a state-led initiative, spearheaded by governors and state superintendents, in collaboration with teachers, school administrators,

college faculty, parents, and education experts. They build on the excellent foundation laid across all states, and have been internationally benchmarked to ensure rigor on par with top-performing nations.

To date, more than 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the CCSS.

In SY 2010–11, the Hawaii Dept. of Education coordinated approximately 30 training sessions throughout the state where administrators and teachers from each school and district had an opportunity to learn about the CCSS initiative, including learning expectations and implications for instruction. Further, to prepare educators to implement the CCSS in SY 2011–12 and 2012–13, Hawaii provided face-to-face training sessions, online modules, webinars, and online professional-learning communities for instructors. Hawaii continues to offer educators CCSS-focused professional development.

## THIS GUIDE INCLUDES:

- Overview of new assessments, which measure student proficiency against more rigorous standards
- Sample test questions
- Overview of accountability for students, teachers, and schools
- Additional resources for parents

# CCSS-Aligned Assessments

## WHY NEW ASSESSMENTS?

Teachers and principals talk a lot about assessments, which are used to measure students' academic achievement. This document highlights the end-of-year summative assessments, which judge (1) student progress toward mastering state standards and (2) program and school effectiveness.

New summative assessments will address longstanding concerns that parents, educators, and employers have had about current state assessments—namely that they measure ability to memorize facts, rather than the skills to think critically and apply knowledge.

## WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THE NEW ASSESSMENTS?

The new assessments for English language arts/literacy and mathematics will enable educators to deepen their understanding of student progress from grade to grade, and just as importantly, identify any gaps in progress so they can address them **well before students enter college or the workforce.**

## Types of assessments

**Formative:** Individual tests given by teachers as needed throughout the year to assess knowledge and skills in specific areas

**Interim:** The same test repeated at set intervals to measure student growth over time

**Summative:** End-of-year assessments administered by the state to measure student performance against a common set of standards

*This document addresses summative assessments.*

## New English language arts assessments:

- Ask students to read more complex fiction and non-fiction texts and use evidence from these texts to answer questions, make inferences, and present persuasive arguments
- Emphasize literacy across all subjects, not just English
- Test writing, listening, reading, and research at grades 3–8 and 11

## New Math assessments:

- Go beyond multiple-choice questions and present students with multi-step problems, conceptual questions, and real-world applications
- Ask students to not only get answers correct, but also explain how they arrived at those answers
- Cover fewer topics in greater depth, focusing on the most critical areas

## Benefits of new assessments

- Scores provide students, parents, and teachers with insights into college and career readiness early enough to address issues and provide extra support where needed.
- Hawaii is a leader in implementing “computer adaptive assessments,” which adjust the difficulty of questions based on student responses. A student who answers correctly receives a more challenging item, while an incorrect answer generates a less challenging question. This method provides students with a more engaging test experience, is more time-efficient, and—especially for low- or high-achieving students—produces more accurate results than traditional methods.
- New assessments will allow Hawaii to compare student performance not only across schools and complex areas statewide, but also with other states that have adopted the CCSS.
- The new assessments are designed to provide accurate measures of achievement and growth for all students, including those with disabilities and English language learners, allowing these students to perform to their potential. The goal of the accommodations is to make the assessments more accessible and to produce results that are valid for these students. The intention is not to give them an advantage over other students. For students with disabilities, the online assessments will address visual, auditory, and physical-access barriers. These students will be able to take a test individualized to meet their needs at the same time as other students in their class. Tools have also been developed to help English language learners demonstrate their knowledge, regardless of their level of proficiency in English.

## Who is developing the new assessments?

Because the CCSS is a state-led initiative, most states across the country chose to join one of two consortia of states working together to develop new assessments based on the CCSS. These are the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

Hawaii is a member of the Smarter Balanced. Read more at [www.smarterbalanced.org](http://www.smarterbalanced.org).

## College Readiness Defined:

**Being college ready means being able to succeed in introductory courses at post-secondary institutions—those that are credit-bearing and transferable. In English language arts/literacy this means demonstrating reading, writing, listening, and research skills, as well as knowledge of specific subject areas needed for entry-level English and composition courses. In mathematics, this means demonstrating foundational knowledge and quantitative-reasoning skills along with specific subject area knowledge (like Algebra) needed for entry-level math and statistics courses.**

# Sample questions by grade level

The following questions are representative of those found on the new assessments. For more examples, visit <http://sbac.portal.airast.org/practice-test/>.

## EXAMPLE OF A 5TH GRADE MATH QUESTION

### SAMPLE ITEM

Five swimmers compete in a 50-meter race. The finish time for each swimmer is shown in the video.

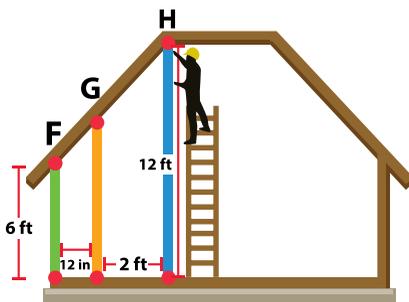
|   |       |   |       |
|---|-------|---|-------|
|  | 23.42 |  | 23.35 |
|  | 23.18 |  | 23.24 |
|  | 23.21 |   |       |

Explain how the results of the race would change if the race used a clock that rounded to the nearest tenth.

Explanation:

## EXAMPLE OF A 8TH GRADE MATH QUESTION

### SAMPLE ITEM



A construction worker is using wooden beams to reinforce the back wall of a room. Determine the height, in feet, of the beam that ends at point G. Explain how you found your answer.

Explanation:

## EXAMPLE OF A 11TH GRADE ENGLISH QUESTION

### SAMPLE ITEM

The following excerpt is from a writer's first draft of a narrative essay. Read the excerpt. Then rewrite it, revising it to correct errors.

I had no idea what to expect when I walked into the arena. There were people everywhere, most of them clad in brightly colored jersey's with different players' names on the back of them. There were some names I couldnt even pronounce. Me and my friend made our way to the corridor that led to the ice rink. The minute I stepped through the doorway, I could feel a rush of cold air hit my face. I could actually smell the ice! I never thought ice had a smell, but it really does. The next thing I noticed was the size, of the ice rink. There were lines and circles painted all over it, and I knew immediately I wouldn't understand the rules. We found our seats, and it wasn't long before the game started. We sat so close to the action that I felt as if I was right in the middle of it, the action was so intense it was hard to follow the puck, keep an eye on the players, and to figure out which team was ahead. When the home team scored a goal. The entire arena erupted with cheering that was so loud, I bet it was heard across town. by the end of the game, I felt so many emotions: delight, disappointment, fear, and excitement. Mostly, though, I felt in awe of the athletes who played this game. They are much more tougher than I ever expected. I suspect others new to hockey will be as impressed as me by this fast, interesting game.

Now rewrite the excerpt, revising it to correct errors.

Answer:

## What Parents Can Expect

**This is a new system with a new way of scoring. Therefore, it is not possible to directly compare new scores with old ones.**

**The new assessments measure deeper knowledge and skills deemed particularly important to students' futures, including problem solving, writing, and critical thinking. The scores provide students, parents, and teachers with the ability to address issues well before students are ready to graduate.**

**Because rigor is higher, student achievement scores may be lower initially.**

A dip should not necessarily be interpreted as a decline in student learning or in educator performance. Educators expect the short-term decline to reverse as teachers and students become more familiar with the standards and better equipped to meet the challenges they present.

## How will schools support students during the transition?

Schools have begun teaching the CCSS and designing learning experiences that align with the grade-level learning expectations. In addition, teachers are exposing students to the performance tasks that are similar to those that will be used to assess them. Many schools have worked with students on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium practice test. If children experience a dip in progress on state test results, don't hesitate to discuss this with their teachers and to work with the school to develop a plan for enrichment or improvement.

## How will students be held accountable?

Students are expected to achieve their grade-level learning expectations. In high school, certain courses (Algebra I, Algebra II, and Expository Writing) now have end-of-course exams and students' performances on these exams will be considered in determining their final grade for the course.

Furthermore, based on students' performance on classroom-learning activities and the statewide assessments, teachers will be able to identify students' strengths as well as their learning needs. As a result, teachers will be able to identify appropriate interventions to support student growth.

The high school diploma will be issued to students who have met all graduation requirements in the required courses by demonstrating proficiency in (1) the CCSS for ELA and mathematics and the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards for all other content areas, and (2) General Learner Outcomes (based on personal responsibility, collaboration, problem solving, communications, technology skills, etc.). Specific requirements for 2014–15 and 2015–16 can be found at:

<http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/StudentLearning/GraduationRequirements/Pages/home.aspx>

## How will teachers be held accountable?

Beginning SY 2013–14, teachers will be evaluated under a new Educator Effectiveness System (EES). The EES uses multiple measures to create a comprehensive picture of each teacher’s effectiveness. For SY 2013–14, the EES is comprised of five components that fall into one of two categories.

| Teacher Practice   | Student Growth and Learning  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom Observations or Working Portfolio</li> <li>Core Professionalism</li> <li>Tripod Student Survey</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hawaii Growth Model</li> <li>Student Learning Objectives (SLO)</li> </ul> |

The measures of teacher practice account for half of a teacher’s annual effectiveness rating, while measures of student growth and learning account for the other half. In combination, the two categories result in one of four summative ratings: Unsatisfactory, Marginal, Effective, or Highly Effective.

Individual effectiveness measures are combined and weighted differently depending on the teacher’s specific job assignment.

| Classroom Teachers of Tested Grades and Subjects | Classroom Teachers of Non-Tested Grades and Subjects | Non-Classroom Teachers (School Level) | Non-Classroom Teachers (Non-School Level) |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Classroom Observations                           | Classroom Observations                               | Core Professionalism                  | Core Professionalism                      |
| Core Professionalism                             | Core Professionalism                                 | Working Portfolio                     | Working Portfolio                         |
| Tripod Student Survey                            | Tripod Student Survey                                | Hawaii Growth Model                   | Student Learning Objectives               |
| Hawaii Growth Model                              | Hawaii Growth Model                                  | Student Learning Objectives           |   |
| Student Learning Objectives                      | Student Learning Objectives                          |                                       |   |

## How will schools be held accountable?

Hawaii will implement a new school accountability system that replaces outdated and ineffective components of the No Child Left Behind Act (although the state is still required to comply with select components as mandated at the federal level).

A new scoring system will use multiple indicators to measure school achievement, growth, readiness, and achievement gaps. Schools will be classified in one of five steps—Recognition, Continuous Improvement, Focus, Priority, and Superintendent’s Zone—as they strive for Continuous Improvement. The state’s highest-performing schools receive recognition, financial awards, and administrative flexibility to sustain their success. Low-performing schools receive customized support and interventions, including applying federally required school turnaround principles.

# Preparing and supporting your child

- Discuss the new tests with your child. Make sure he or she is not scared or anxious going into the new tests.
- With an older child, explain that the new assessments were created to help him or her better prepare for college and career.
- Explain to your child that the tests will initially be more challenging. Tell your child you have high expectations and that you are there to help every step of the way.
- Review test results with your child. Bring the teacher into the discussion as needed.
- Provide a quiet, comfortable place for studying at home and make sure your child gets a good night's sleep and a nutritious breakfast before a test.

## Staying informed and involved

- Become familiar with the CCSS.
- Explore practice tests through an interactive online platform: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test/>
- Read all comments written by the teacher on assignments, tests, and report cards. Ask teachers to explain anything that is unclear and discuss how you can best work together to address comments.
- Monitor your child's progress. If your child needs extra help or wants to learn more about a subject, work with his or her teacher to identify opportunities for tutoring, after-school clubs, or other resources.
- Do not judge your child based on a single test score. Tests are not perfect measures of what a child can do. There are many other factors that might influence a test score. For example, a child can be affected by the way he or she is feeling on test day or the particular classroom setting.
- Meet with your child's teacher as often as possible to discuss his or her progress. Ask for activities to do at home to help prepare for tests and improve your child's proficiency.

## Additional Resources

- For more information on Hawaii Assessments, visit: <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/Testing/Pages/home.aspx>
- For a more detailed look at what the CCSS mean at each grade level, visit: <http://www.pta.org/parentsguide>
- For more information on the Smarter Balanced consortium, of which Hawaii is a member, visit: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/>
- For more information on the EES, visit: <http://eesteacher.weebly.com>



**National PTA**  
1250 N Pitt Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Toll-Free: (800) 307-4PTA (4782)  
PTA.org • info@pta.org