With California’s new academic standards comes a new, 21st century way to measure student achievement.

A new start

To help students meet the challenges of the future and be successful in college and careers, California has developed a new, comprehensive plan for teaching and learning. This plan includes higher academic standards (the California Common Core State Standards), greater local decision-making, and more resources dedicated to schools and students with the greatest need. A series of new tests are meant to help teachers measure student success and adjust their instruction as needed. These tests, known as the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), include the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test administered for the first time in the spring of 2015. The results provide an exciting opportunity to focus on the needs of students and support teachers and schools.

This series of tests replaces the outdated, fill-in-the-bubble type of pencil-and-paper exams. It emphasizes not only subject knowledge, but also the critical-thinking, analytical writing, and problem-solving skills students need to be successful in college and career in the 21st century.

The SBAC test should not be compared to the old California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) exam because it measures a different set of skills and knowledge. This year’s test results are a fresh, new start. They will establish a baseline for measuring student progress over time.
In the spring of 2015, students in grades three through eight and eleven took a new assessment to measure their progress in learning English language arts (ELA) and mathematics through the new California Common Core State Standards.*

These tests are an academic check-up, designed to guide discussions among parents and teachers and help teachers and schools adjust instruction to meet student needs. They are just one of many ways student learning is measured by schools.

Because this is the first year of the new tests, many, if not most, students may need to make significant progress to reach the standards set for math and ELA that accompany college and career readiness. No student, parent or teacher should be discouraged by these scores, however. These scores WILL NOT be used to determine class placement or whether a student moves on to the next grade.

* Students with intellectual disabilities take an alternate test. English learners who have been in the United States less than 12 months do not take the English portion of this assessment.