

# A BIG WIN FOR KANSAS STUDENTS



## Kansas College and Career Ready Standards

In 2013, Kansas' on-time high school graduation rate was 86%—higher than the national average. Younger students also appeared to be performing well, as more than two-thirds of 4th and 8th graders demonstrated proficiency in reading and math on the Kansas State Assessment (KSA). Unfortunately, there was another story to be told. That same year on the Nation's Report Card (also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP), less than half of 4th and 8th grade students demonstrated proficiency in both subjects. And in 2012, 30% of students in the state system of higher education had to take at least one remedial course because they lacked the skills needed for college-level work—

evidence of the misalignment between public education standards and higher education expectations. Although many students were graduating from high school and achieving proficiency scores on the state assessment, they were not prepared for success. To address this disconnect, in 2010 the State Board of Education adopted a set of college- and career-ready standards in English language arts (ELA) and math to ensure students were graduating with the skills most essential for success in college and the workforce.

The previous state standards did not provide students with the skills they needed for success after high school. According to a report by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, the ELA standards were vague, repetitive, and missing almost 20% of the most essential content. The math standards, at 348 pages long, failed to prioritize the most essential content and were poorly organized, making them amongst the worst in the country. On the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's 2007 *Leaders and Laggards* report, the state received a C in postsecondary and workforce readiness and its standards received a D in rigor.

With the adoption of higher standards, Kansas is one step closer to helping ensure that students will have the opportunity to reach their full potential. By 2020, 66% of jobs in Kansas will require a postsecondary credential. Currently, only 41% of adults in the state have such a credential, resulting in a 25% skills gap. Higher standards are essential to helping close this gap.

Kansas' Proficiency Performance on the 2013 KSA and NAEP

Assessment	4th Math	4th Reading	8th Math	8th Reading
KSA	82%	85%	77%	86%
NAEP	48%	38%	40%	36%



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## Better Standards Deserve Better Assessments

Teachers across Kansas have been hard at work putting these higher academic goals in place since their adoption. It has been a significant undertaking involving countless hours of professional development, curricula alignment, and learning strategies to engage students more deeply than ever before.

The next phase of this work is to implement an improved assessment that is more meaningful to students, teachers, and parents in determining which skills a student has or has not yet mastered. The state needs a test that can measure the critical thinking and problem solving skills that our students need to succeed—and existing state tests cannot evaluate this level of learning. Improved assessments present an opportunity to move beyond tests that simply measure rote memorization skills to ones that mirror the higher standards and provide teachers with valuable information on how effectively they are teaching and students are learning.

Putting better assessments in place needs to be part of a larger system of accountability that supports student achievement and holds schools accountable for successfully teaching the content outlined in the standards. At the heart of accountability is the need to ensure that all students across Kansas receive the same high-quality education. Meaningful tests serve as school-wide academic checkups that can identify struggling students and schools in need of extra support so that interventions can be put in place. In addition, improved assessments can identify high-achieving students who require support to maintain their academic engagement and provide them with the resources necessary to continue to excel.

For the past four years, teams of academics, testing experts, and teachers have been working tirelessly to create two new testing options aligned to these standards: PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of

Readiness for College and Careers) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. These two testing systems were field tested in spring 2014 in 35 states.

The tests aim to do the following:

- Accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness.
- Assess a wide range of skills, including critical thinking and writing skills.
- Provide real-time information on student progress to help guide teacher instruction and improve learning.

Kansas was originally a member of the Smarter Balanced consortium, but withdrew in 2013. Instead, the state chose to commission the University of Kansas, which had been developing the state assessments for the past 30 years, to develop tests aligned to the new college- and career-ready standards. The aligned Kansas Assessment Program (KAP) will serve as a useful tool to help improve learning. The system has computer-based, summative end-of-year assessments that contain various question formats, including multidisciplinary performance tasks (MDPT). These are extensive tasks that better measure college- and career-readiness skills through problems involving extensive writing and complex analysis, which cannot be measured through multiple-choice items. Along with the summative assessment, KAP contains formative assessments that can be used in the classroom to serve as academic checkups throughout the school year to guide teacher instruction and provide information about what students know and can do, and where they need support. The KAP tests were field tested across the state last year and will be given to students in grades 3–8 and 10 in ELA and math in spring 2015.

During this transition, it is important to ensure that Kansas' state tests provide a reliable measure of how students are doing on the path to college and careers at the state and national level. Leaders continue to be enthusiastic about the KAP tests because they meet so many of the criteria that make up a high-quality aligned

assessment. As advocates, we need to ensure that the state tests accurately measure college and career readiness and have these characteristics to serve as a useful tool to help students improve.

## A High-Quality Assessment:

- Is developed with input from academic and testing experts, as well as teachers.
- Is field tested and reviewed before full implementation.
- Assesses a wide range of real-world skills using a variety of question formats.
- Includes formative or interim assessments that act as academic checkups to ensure that students are keeping pace.
- Provides detailed and timely feedback that sends an early warning signal to teachers if students are not on track so that interventions can be put in place.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is the difference between standards and curriculum?

- Standards are a set of guidelines for what students are expected to know and be able to do at specific points in their education. Standards provide the foundation for key components of the education system, including curricula, instructional materials, teacher training, and assessments.
- A curriculum is the course of study covering the standards. It is set by local school districts and includes the lesson plans, programs, and textbooks that teachers use to teach the content and skills outlined in the standards.

### 2. If students are learning with different curricula, how can they take the same test?

- Although teachers use different materials and curricula, students still learn the same skills outlined in the standards. Teachers can be creative in their instruction, designing lessons to best reach their students and establishing a classroom where all students can achieve.



## Kansas College and Career Ready Standards:

- Are more rigorous academic standards that prepare all students for success after high school.
- Emphasize real-world skills such as critical thinking and problem solving.
- Are comparable across states.

## Better Assessments:

- Give us an honest, objective report of how our students are doing.
- Ensure all students are held to the same expectations.
- Identify struggling students so they can get the help they need.
- Identify high-achieving students to provide them with the resources necessary to continue to excel.

### 3. Will the new test replace the old state test?

- Yes. The KAP tests will replace the previous assessments that students took in 2014 in grades 3–8 and 10 in math and ELA.

### 4. Will test scores impact schools and districts?

- School-wide test results will be used as one measure for school accountability. Just as teachers use tests as academic checkups for individual students, they are also checkups for schools. Districts need to identify schools in need of extra support so that interventions can be put in place to ensure that all students across a district and in the state will receive a high-quality education.

### 5. Will test scores impact teachers?

- Student growth measures are one factor used in teacher evaluations. For teachers of grades and subjects with corresponding KAP tests, student scores must be used to measure student growth.
- KAP scores will be factored into evaluations beginning in 2015, but will not be used to inform personnel decisions until the 2017–18 school year.

### 6. How will test scores impact students?

- There are no testing requirements for graduation or promotion.

### 7. What kind of data will be collected? Will it be released?

- Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Kansas is required to collect data on school performance. Aggregate data collected includes student test scores

and information such as attendance, support services, and academic growth. *The state will not release any personally identifiable student information.* Only individuals who interact with students on a daily basis, such as teachers and parents, are allowed to see student-specific information.

- Federal law protects the privacy of student information and education records through the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The only information that will be publicly available will contain aggregate data for schools, districts, and subgroups.

### 8. How were teachers involved in the test development process?

- Test developers at the University of Kansas consulted teachers during the item development and review processes.

### 9. Do students need to be computer literate?

- The summative assessments are entirely computer-based, so students need to be computer literate.
- While it may take time to ensure that every school has the hardware necessary and meets the technology requirements, this is a smart investment. Technology is not going away. Ensuring that all students, regardless of geography or household income, have equal access to technology is critical to preparing students for a 21st century competitive workforce.

### 10. Where can I go for more information?

- [www.ksassessments.org/about-kap](http://www.ksassessments.org/about-kap)
- [www.ksassessments.org](http://www.ksassessments.org)
- [www.BusinessForCore.org](http://www.BusinessForCore.org)