

Dear Parents:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) require that students with disabilities be included in statewide testing. In California, this is called the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. Until last year a student with a disability took one of two tests:

1. California Standards Test (CST) with or without accommodations and/or modifications. All general education students and most students with disabilities take the CST.
2. California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA). The CAPA is designed primarily for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Starting in the spring of 2008 for students with disabilities in grades 3-5, a new test called the California Modified Assessment (CMA) was available as another option. This year the CMA will be expanded to include students in grades 6-8 for English-Language Arts, grades 6-7 for mathematics and grade eight for science. The CMA differs from the CST in the following ways:

1. While the questions are aligned to state standards, they are less challenging than the questions on the CST.
2. The reading passages are shorter in length than the ones on the CST.
3. The formatting of the questions in the test booklet is designed to provide less visual distraction than that of the CST. For example, there is additional white space and the font sizes are larger.
4. On multiple choice questions there are three answer choices instead of the four choices on the CST.
5. The CMA uses graphics for many items as opposed to the CST.

Attached are samples that illustrate the differences between the CST and the CMA.

In order for your child to be eligible to take the CMA, he/she must meet the following criteria:

1. He/she must have taken the CST in a previous year and scored Below Basic or Far Below Basic in either English-Language Arts or Math.
2. Based on the results of other testing and data, he/she will not achieve grade-level proficiency and will not receive a proficient score on the CST, even with accommodations.

3. You, as parents, must be informed about the CMA and be involved in the decision to have your child take the CMA through the IEP team process.

You are receiving this letter because we believe that your child may be eligible to take the CMA this spring and want to ensure that you are informed about your options.

An IEP team meeting will be held or an IEP amendment will be developed for your consent to determine if your child is eligible to take the CMA in the spring of 2009.

Also attached is a brochure developed by the California Department of Education that further explains the statewide testing process for students with disabilities.

If you have any questions, please contact: