



Spring 2021 Performance on Three Locally Determined Assessments in California

Region 15 Comprehensive Center at
WestEd
January 2022

The content of this report was developed under a grant from the Department of Education through the Office of Program and Grantee Support Services (PGSS) within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), by the Region 15 Comprehensive Center at WestEd under Award #S283B190053. This contains resources that are provided for the reader’s convenience. These materials may contain the views and recommendations of various subject matter experts as well as hypertext links, contact addresses, and websites to information created and maintained by other public and private organizations. The U.S. Department of Education does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of any outside information included in these materials. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service, enterprise, curriculum, or program of instruction mentioned in this document is intended or should be inferred.





As part of the technical assistance provided by the Region 15 Comprehensive Center at WestEd (R15 CC) to the California State Board of Education (SBE) and California Department of Education (CDE) staff, a request was made to the R15 CC to gather data from three selected testing publishers that had supported the administration of spring 2021 local assessments. This information, in addition to the state-level data provided by CDE, may help to provide a fuller picture of student performance in California from spring 2021. All participation numbers and results displayed in this report were provided by Curriculum Associates, NWEA, and Renaissance Learning, respectively, either directly or through a publicly available reporting site. Additional information regarding metrics and definitions was also provided by the testing publishers. The R15 CC thanks these companies for their cooperation and support in the development of this report. Any specific inquiries regarding the data should be directed to the testing publishers.

Introduction

In spring 2021, the California State Board of Education (SBE) affirmed that California school districts were required to administer state tests, if they could viably be administered, or other standards-aligned assessments, if state testing was not a viable option to gauge student learning during spring 2021. Per the U.S. Department of Education, viability referred to the ability to administer the statewide summative assessment, given a district's specific circumstances in the context of the pandemic.¹

The state's intent was to ensure that data about student learning would be available in the local context from spring 2021. Specifically, districts were required to use locally determined assessments to provide information to their families and community when they could not viably administer the Smarter Balanced summative English language arts and mathematics assessments, which are part of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress program (CAASPP), due to the challenges of remote testing and the fact that most districts were not in session in person until late in the spring. In addition to the state's Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments and California Alternate Assessments for English language arts and mathematics, the range of assessments available included the Smarter Balanced interim

¹ <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/04/CA-assessment-response-letter.pdf>

assessments, diagnostic, benchmark, or other interim assessments that met certain conditions, described below.

The SBE and California Department of Education (CDE) recognized that for some school districts, administration of the designated state assessments could prove an insurmountable challenge. In these cases, to provide information to parents and local communities, the districts were required to report on the basis of locally determined assessments, which had to meet several conditions outlined by the SBE: (1) they were to be aligned to California Common Core State Standards; (2) they could be used to test students in grades 3-8 and 11; (3) they could be uniformly administered across grades, schools, or the district; and (4) the results could be presented to the public. Many school districts in California currently use diagnostic or interim assessments to guide instruction and monitor growth.² As part of the fall 2020 learning continuity plans,³ schools and districts were required to administer diagnostic or interim/benchmark assessments.

In cases where administering the state-designated assessment in English language arts and mathematics, (the Smarter Balanced summative assessment) in spring 2021 was not viable, schools and districts could fulfill the testing requirement with local assessments that met the designated SBE criteria. Three diagnostic tests prominently used in spring 2021 identified by SBE and CDE staff were i-Ready, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth, and Star. Each test claims alignment with California Common Core State Standards.⁴ Each is computer-adaptive, where the test questions change in difficulty based on a student's answer. Each is used to identify a student's strong or weak academic areas. Finally, each is part of a suite of associated learning materials, including online programming, teacher guides, curricula, and frequent short assessments.

The tables throughout this document summarize California students' performance on these three selected assessments.⁵ The scores/metrics have been provided by the assessment publishers. The metrics used by each test publisher and the definitions provided for the performance categories are unique to each test. Because performance on each of the three assessments is calculated differently, results from the three assessments are not directly comparable. In addition, these unique metrics and definitions prohibit the direct comparison of performance to the state's CAASPP assessments. Included, for comparison, are the 2021 and 2019 scores for each of the three assessments.

² <https://edsources.org/2021/california-could-allow-school-districts-to-choose-their-own-standardized-tests-this-year/651364>

³ <https://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr21/yr21rel18.asp>

⁴ <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/guidanceonassessments.asp>

⁵ Throughout this report, the row percentages in the tables may not add to 100%, due to rounding.

i-Ready (Curriculum Associates)

i-Ready is a computer adaptive⁶ test that is aligned with K-12 Common Core State Standards.⁷ Curriculum Associates, the publisher of i-Ready, distributes online and classroom curriculum materials, as well as teacher resources that are designed to accompany the i-Ready diagnostic assessments.⁸ The full test is designed to be taken three or four times a year.⁹ The i-Ready Reading assessment covers early/foundational reading skills, vocabulary, and comprehension for both informational and literary texts.¹⁰ The i-Ready Math assessment is intended to test skills within the subject areas of numbers and operations, algebra and algebraic thinking, measurement and data, and geometry.¹¹

Roughly 600,000 California students took this test in spring 2021 compared to the less than 300,000 in 2019. Curriculum Associates cautions that it is important to note that a substantial percentage of students took the local assessments remotely in 2021, without direct proctoring, which may impact direct comparisons between 2021 and 2019.

Curriculum Associates sets a range of scores for each performance category. Curriculum Associates reports the percent of students with a score for each range. i-Ready's placements are an indication of what students are expected to know at each grade level. The mid on-grade placement refers to students who may be considered proficient for their grade.

Curriculum Associates provided the following definitions for the performance categories:

- **Mid On-Grade or Above**
Students who have met the minimum requirements for the expectations of college- and career-ready standards in their grade level. Students at this level are likely or very likely to be proficient on the Smarter Balanced assessment.
- **Early On-Grade**
Students who have only partially met these grade-level expectations. Students at this level are somewhat likely to be proficient on the Smarter Balanced assessment.
- **1 Grade Below**
Students placed one year below grade level. Students at this level are unlikely to be proficient on the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

⁶ <https://www.curriculumassociates.com/diagnostic>

⁷ <https://www.edsurge.com/product-reviews/i-ready>

⁸ <https://www.edsurge.com/product-reviews/i-ready>

⁹ <https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/i-ready-assessment-description>

¹⁰ <https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/i-ready-assessment-description>

¹¹ <https://i-readycentral.com/pdfs/faq-what-domains-are-covered-by-the-i-ready-diagnostic/>

- **2 Grades Below**

Students placed two years below grade level. Students at this level are unlikely to be proficient on the Smarter Balanced assessment.

- **3+ Grades Below**

Students placed three or more years below grade level. Students at this level are unlikely to be proficient on the Smarter Balanced assessment.

i-Ready Math Results — Spring 2021 Performance Distribution¹²

Grade	Number of Test Takers in California	Three or More Grade Levels Below	Two Grade Levels Below	One Grade Level Below	Early On Grade Level	Mid or Above Grade Level
Third Grade	108,709	7%	13%	37%	18%	25%
Fourth Grade	109,848	11%	12%	33%	18%	26%
Fifth Grade	108,418	14%	11%	29%	18%	27%
Sixth Grade	96,697	18%	11%	26%	19%	26%
Seventh Grade	82,658	23%	10%	25%	20%	21%
Eighth Grade	82,551	26%	9%	23%	17%	25%
Total, Third-Eighth Grade	588,881					
Eleventh Grade	13,781	37%	20%	16%	15%	13%

i-Ready Math Results — Spring 2019 Performance Distribution

Grade	Number of Test Takers in California	Three or More Grade Levels Below	Two Grade Levels Below	One Grade Level Below	Early On Grade Level	Mid or Above Grade Level
Third Grade	57,025	4%	8%	33%	20%	35%
Fourth Grade	55,675	7%	9%	26%	21%	36%
Fifth Grade	56,099	10%	9%	27%	22%	31%
Sixth Grade	48,050	16%	8%	30%	21%	25%
Seventh Grade	39,294	24%	11%	30%	19%	16%
Eighth Grade	30,747	30%	14%	23%	17%	16%
Total, Third-Eighth Grade	286,890					
Eleventh Grade	3,508	60%	23%	10%	5%	1%

¹² Throughout this report, row percentages may not add to 100%, due to rounding.

i-Ready Reading Results— Spring 2021 Performance Distribution

Grade	Number of Test Takers in California	Three or More Grade Levels Below	Two Grade Levels Below	One Grade Level Below	Early On Grade Level	Mid or Above Grade Level
Third Grade	102,842	7%	15%	17%	24%	37%
Fourth Grade	104,097	13%	8%	33%	15%	31%
Fifth Grade	102,127	13%	18%	24%	19%	25%
Sixth Grade	91,853	23%	12%	20%	13%	32%
Seventh Grade	77,818	28%	8%	16%	17%	31%
Eighth Grade	77,645	29%	5%	16%	18%	31%
Total, Third-Eighth Grade	556,382					
Eleventh Grade	13,408	35%	8%	15%	22%	20%

i-Ready Reading Results — Spring 2019 Performance Distribution

Grade	Number of Test Takers in California	Three or More Grade Levels Below	Two Grade Levels Below	One Grade Level Below	Early On Grade Level	Mid or Above Grade Level
Third Grade	54,690	6%	12%	18%	28%	35%
Fourth Grade	53,211	12%	7%	37%	17%	27%
Fifth Grade	53,322	13%	20%	28%	18%	21%
Sixth Grade	44,215	27%	14%	21%	11%	26%
Seventh Grade	34,447	37%	10%	16%	16%	21%
Eighth Grade	28,167	41%	7%	15%	17%	21%
Total, Third-Eighth Grade	268,052					
Eleventh Grade	4,012	53%	9%	15%	16%	7%

MAP Growth (NWEA)

MAP Growth is a computer-adaptive test¹³ that is aligned with the K-12 Common Core State Standards.¹⁴ Roughly 240,000 CA students took this test in 2021. The test is designed to be administered three or more times a year to capture students' learning growth.¹⁵ The purpose of the MAP English Language Arts assessment is to measure foundational reading skills, language and writing, vocabulary, and students' knowledge of the structure and key ideas of literary and informational texts.¹⁶ The MAP Math assessment is focused on the following content areas: geometry, measurement and data, number and operations, and algebraic thinking.¹⁷ NWEA reports the "percentage of students projected to be proficient on end-of-year assessments." According to NWEA, it calculates this measure by comparing a student's MAP Growth score "to cut scores found in a state's linking study; this allows educators to identify students who are or are not projected to be proficient on state summative tests," thereby contextualizing achievement relative to state proficiency standards.¹⁸

¹³ <https://www.nwea.org/blog/2021/12-common-questions-parents-ask-map-growth-assessment/>

¹⁴ <https://www.nwea.org/blog/2018/study-concludes-map-growth-items-align-common-core-state-standards/>

¹⁵ <https://www.nwea.org/blog/2018/study-concludes-map-growth-items-align-common-core-state-standards/>

¹⁶ <https://cdn.nwea.org/state-information/California-2020-21.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://cdn.nwea.org/state-information/California-2020-21.pdf>

¹⁸ https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2021/05/User-guide-for-interpreting-the-NWEA-state-dashboard-Exploring-the-educational-impacts-of-COVID-19_NWEA_Guide.2021.07.pdf

MAP Growth Math Results — Spring 2021 Percentage of Students Expected to Be Proficient on End-of-Year Assessments

Grade	Number of Test-Takers in California	Percentage of Students Expected to Be Proficient on End-of-Year Assessments
Third Grade	35,825	34.7%
Fourth Grade	36,785	28.3%
Fifth Grade	37,490	24.3%
Sixth Grade	39,254	28.0%
Seventh Grade	40,319	29.9%
Eighth Grade	40,209	29.6%
Total	229,882	

MAP Growth Math Results — Spring 2019 Percentage of Students Expected to Be Proficient on End-of-Year Assessments

Grade	Number of Test-Takers in California	Percentage of Students Expected to Be Proficient on End-of-Year Assessments
Third Grade	34,163	47.9%
Fourth Grade	33,982	40.0%
Fifth Grade	35,933	34.3%
Sixth Grade	36,687	33.8%
Seventh Grade	36,747	32.9%
Eighth Grade	32,236	29.1%
Total	209,748	

MAP Growth Reading Results — Spring 2021 Percentage of Students Expected to Be Proficient on End-of-Year Assessments

Grade	Number of Test-Takers in California	Percentage of Students Expected to Be Proficient on End-of-Year Assessments
Third Grade	32,583	37.0%
Fourth Grade	33,456	38.4%
Fifth Grade	33,768	41.7%
Sixth Grade	38,075	42.6%
Seventh Grade	38,996	48.5%
Eighth Grade	38,989	45.6%
Total	215,867	

MAP Growth Reading Results — Spring 2019 Percentage of Students Expected to Be Proficient on End-of-Year Assessments

Grade	Number of Test-Takers in California	Percentage of Students Expected to Be Proficient on End-of-Year Assessments
Third Grade	33,590	43.1%
Fourth Grade	31,450	43.8%
Fifth Grade	32,824	44.9%
Sixth Grade	32,314	40.7%
Seventh Grade	31,872	44.8%
Eighth Grade	29,787	40.4%
Total	191,837	

Star (Renaissance)

Star is a computer adaptive-test that is aligned with the K-12 Common Core State Standards.¹⁹ In spring 2021, roughly 564,000 California students took the Star Math test in 2021; roughly 776,000 took the Star Reading test.²⁰ Renaissance emphasizes the test is closely correlated with other state assessments and is predictive of ACT and SAT scores.²¹ The Star Reading test covers word knowledge and skills, comprehension strategy and constructing meaning, analyzing literary texts, understanding authors craft, analyzing argument and evaluating text.²² The Star Math test is organized around the following conceptual “strands”: numeration concepts, computation processes, word problems, estimation, data analysis and statistics, geometry, measurement, and algebra.²³

Renaissance provided the authors with the count of students in each of four performance categories, based on recommended cuts developed by the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI).²⁴ Renaissance stated that students whose test scores place them in a percentile rank of 40 or higher will likely meet end-of-year performance goals as defined by the state or local standards. Cut scores at the 25th and 10th percentile also help teachers determine appropriate instruction for different groups of students, according to Renaissance.

Renaissance associates the following labels with these categories:

- At or above grade level: At/above 40th percentile
- On watch: 25th to 39th percentile
- Intervention: 10th to 25th percentile
- Urgent intervention: below 10th percentile.²⁵

¹⁹ <https://doc.renlearn.com/kmnet/r001480701gcfbb9.pdf>

²⁰ Renaissance indicated that they did not remove students in districts that also participated in Smarter Balanced.

²¹ <https://renaissance.widen.net/s/qwtvjjwhgl>

²² <https://help.renaissance.com/US/PDF/SR/SRRPTechnicalManual.pdf>

²³ <https://help.renaissance.com/US/PDF/SM/SMRPTechnicalManual.pdf>

²⁴ See also <https://www.renaissance.com/2016/09/27/how-to-decipher-ncrti-ncii-ratings/>

²⁵ <https://renaissance.widen.net/s/t8trbrt2tc/r63444>

Star Math Results — Spring 2021 Performance Distribution

Grade	Number of Scores	Urgent Intervention	Intervention	On Watch	At or Above Grade Level
Third Grade	83,273	22%	17%	11%	49%
Fourth Grade	83,997	23%	16%	11%	49%
Fifth Grade	83,842	24%	16%	12%	48%
Sixth Grade	92,387	26%	16%	12%	46%
Seventh Grade	88,850	22%	15%	13%	50%
Eighth Grade	88,560	20%	16%	13%	52%
Eleventh Grade	42,686	17%	12%	12%	59%
Total	563,595				

Star Math Results — Spring 2019 Performance Distribution

Grade	Number of Scores	Urgent Intervention	Intervention	On Watch	At or Above Grade Level
Third Grade	54,745	14%	13%	12%	61%
Fourth Grade	53,381	15%	13%	11%	62%
Fifth Grade	52,755	17%	15%	12%	56%
Sixth Grade	43,819	21%	15%	13%	51%
Seventh Grade	29,794	23%	16%	13%	48%
Eighth Grade	24,680	21%	17%	13%	49%
Eleventh Grade	8,926	23%	14%	13%	50%
Total	268,100				

Star Reading Results — Spring 2021 Performance Distribution

Grade	Number of Scores	Urgent Intervention	Intervention	On Watch	At or Above Grade Level
Third Grade	133,085	25%	15%	13%	47%
Fourth Grade	130,796	24%	16%	14%	46%
Fifth Grade	125,709	24%	19%	14%	43%
Sixth Grade	121,368	28%	19%	15%	37%
Seventh Grade	108,480	27%	19%	15%	38%
Eighth Grade	107,154	27%	20%	16%	36%
Eleventh Grade	49,678	26%	20%	17%	37%
Total	776,270				

Star Reading Results — Spring 2019 Performance Distribution

Grade	Number of Scores	Urgent Intervention	Intervention	On Watch	At or Above Grade Level
Third Grade	164,564	19%	15%	13%	53%
Fourth Grade	154,473	19%	15%	15%	51%
Fifth Grade	145,596	21%	19%	15%	44%
Sixth Grade	106,272	25%	20%	16%	39%
Seventh Grade	71,137	26%	20%	16%	38%
Eighth Grade	60,995	28%	21%	16%	35%
Eleventh Grade	21,539	31%	22%	18%	30%
Total	724,576				