



## **Kansas State Assessments (KSA)**

### **Understanding the Kansas State Assessments**

The Kansas State Assessments provide comprehensive oversight for teaching and learning in the areas of Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Science and History-Government. The tests that make up the Kansas State Assessments fulfill the requirements of state and federal laws that mandate yearly testing in core subject areas.

The purposes of these mandated tests are to monitor student progress at attaining proficiency in core academic subjects. Instructional practices, areas where increased instruction is necessary and systemic non-proficiency are observable measures through these tests. Additionally, as one of the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act is that all schools be educating 100% of students to a proficient level by the year 2014, these assessments are the reporting instrument for measuring that progress.

The assessments are designed to be aligned to the Curricular Standards developed by the Kansas State Department of Education. The curriculum lays out a framework by which each subject area is organized and specifies the skills and knowledge that a student needs to develop in order to reach a proficient level in that subject. The tests are very specifically aligned so that questions are asked that link to exact standards of knowledge a child should have attained.

Students in Kansas will start taking Reading and Mathematics assessments in grade 3. They will take these assessments yearly through grade 8, and then again in high school. In addition, students in grades 5, 8 and 11 take a Writing Assessment. For the school year 2011-2012 the Writing Assessment is not being administered. It will be administered again in the 2012-2013 school year.

An assessment is given in Science to students in grades 4 and 7, then again in high school. The History-Government Assessment is given to students in grades 6, 8 and again in high school.

The high school assessment could occur in 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade by legal standards, the final decision about which grade is tested occurs with the school district. Additionally, within the testing windows districts will make decisions about times and dates for the administration of the assessment.

### **Format of the Kansas State Assessments**

The Kansas State Assessments are formatted in the following manner based on academic subject:

**Reading Assessment**– the questions are all multiple choice. There are three test sessions of 45 minute each, although students may use however much time they need. The number of questions on the assessment ranges from 58 to 84 as students' progress to higher grade levels.

**Writing Assessment**– this assessment is not offered in the 2011-2012 school year, however in other years will call on students to write an essay response that is scored by a rubric. There are questions in other formats as well, though some modifications to the test are ongoing. The assessment is given in four sessions of about 45-60 minutes; however student will be able to use as much time as they need.

Mathematics Assessment– the questions on the mathematics assessment are all in a multiple-choice format. There are between 70 and 86 questions on the test, ranging toward the higher number in the later grades. The test is administered in three sessions, two of which allow calculator use. The sessions are approximately 45-60 minutes but students will have the time they require to complete the assessment.

Science Assessment– all the questions on the Science Assessment are in a multiple-choice format. There are between 44 and 60 questions on the tests given over two untimed sessions, which generally run 45-60 minutes.

History-Government Assessment– the questions are in a multiple-choice format and range between 48 and 60 questions. Students will have as much time as they need on this two section assessment.

All these tests are given online unless a student requires a paper-based version per an accommodation. Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or who have a Section 504 plan will receive their required accommodations. There are Spanish-language versions of the Mathematics and Science assessments only.

## **Taking the Kansas State Assessments**

The individual subject area assessments are formatted to reflect the learning standards of the state curriculum. Students will receive scores that reflect their proficiency in each individual assessed subject. There are five proficiency levels: Exemplary, Exceeds Standards, Meets Standards, Approaches Standards, and Academic Warning.

The proficiency level which a student tests at is derived from the scaled score that student receives. The scaled score is calculated based on the number of correct answers factored by their level of difficulty out of the total number of questions. The “cut score” is the level at which one proficiency level moves to the next.

In the subject areas, students are expected to learn about the following content areas in order to achieve proficiency:

Reading – the strategies involved with reading comprehension and the ability to respond to a variety of literary and informational texts.

Writing – students will be assessed based on their ability to use and convey: ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and language conventions.

Mathematics – student are assessed at a grade-appropriate level on numerical sense, algebra, geometry, and data (probability and statistics)

Science – the topics covered within the assessments are science as inquiry (process-oriented), physical science, life science, earth and space science, science and technology, science in personal and environmental perspective, and the history and nature of science.

History-Government – this test assess students’ knowledge in civics and government, economics, geography and history.

Each of these broad fields has their sub-skills and specific knowledge. These are laid out in the curriculum that teachers use in their planning process and the test design will specify the number of questions to be asked based on each standard.

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