

## CALIFORNIA

# Q&A on the new state tests and results

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**Q .** Why did California change tests?

**A .** California and other states adopted the Common Core State Standards to provide more relevant education and better training for college and career. To assess how well students are learning, the state abandoned the old STAR test and joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. From spring 2015, the state has administered the new, online tests.

**Q .** What happened to API scores?

**A .** The state board of education has suspended calculating the Academic Performance Index, which rated each school and district on a 200-to-999 scale, based on STAR results and other factors like the high school exit exam. It is not certain whether the index will be revived.

**Q .** When will I see my child's scores?

**A .** School districts are supposed to be mailing out test results this month or next month.

**Q .** Why am I not getting scores for some of my children?

**A .** Smarter Balanced includes only English and math tests, which were administered last spring only to students in grades 3 to 8, and 11. Science tests were given to students in grades 5, 8 and 10. Students in other grades do not take Smarter Balanced.

**Q .** How do I tell how tough or easy the new standards are?

**A .** The state Department of Education has posted sample tests on its website. Go to <http://www.caaspp.org/practice-andtraining/>.

**Q .** So what is so different about the new tests? And why do they have such an odd name?

**A .** The tests are aligned with California's new content standards for English language arts and mathematics. They examine critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Tests are administered on a computer and are adaptive, meaning that in the course of the test, the questions will become more or less difficult based on how the student performs. If the student answers a question correctly, the next question may be more challenging; if the student answers it incorrectly, the next question may be less difficult. The tests provide more support for students, such as those learning English or those with disabilities, who may need help.

**Q .** What do my kid's scores mean?

**A .** For each grade level and subject area, students receive a score from approximately 2000 to 3000. The test reports show how a student performed in key areas, also called claims, in English Language Arts (reading, writing, listening and research/ inquiry) and in mathematics (problem solving and modeling/data analysis, concepts and procedures, and communicating- reasoning).