



# COMMON FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

• A GUIDE FOR PARENTS •

## ASSESSMENT WINDOWS FOR 2012-13

**AIMSWEB FALL BENCHMARK:** SEPT. 4-7

**HSGQE RE-TEST:** OCT. 2-4

**Q1 CFA:** OCT. 22-25

**WORKKEYS:** NOV. 12-15  
(GRADE 11 ONLY/GR12 OPT.)

**Q2 CFA:** DEC. 10-13

**AIMSWEB WINTER BENCHMARK:** JAN. 7-11

**WRITING ASSESSMENT:**  
JAN. 28-FEB. 1

**TERRA NOVA:** FEB. 4-7  
(GRADES 2-11)

**Q3 CFA:** MARCH 4-7

**SBA & HSGQE:** APRIL 2-4  
(GR 3-10 / RETEST 11-12)

**AIMSWEB SPRING BENCHMARK:** MAY 6-10

**Q4 CFA:** MAY 13-16

## OUR FIVE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Each and every day, educators in all CRSD classrooms focus on five essential questions to guide teaching and learning:

1. What do our students need to know?
2. How will they learn it?
3. How will we know if they have learned it?
4. What will we do if they don't learn it?
5. What will we do if they already knew it?

Question #1 is answered by our curriculum, which is built upon the Common Core State Standards and references the Core Knowledge Content Sequence. Question #2 is all about the ways in which this content is delivered to students: teaching strategies, textbooks and resource materials, and instructional approaches appropriate to each grade level and group of students. Question #3 is critical, as we cannot answer the final two questions without reliable evidence that our students have learned what they need to know. In years past, we have not had a consistent answer to Question #3. Beginning this fall, however, we do.

To help us accurately answer Question #3, students across the district will participate in Common Forma-

tive Assessments (CFAs) at the end of each quarter to measure mastery of a pre-determined set of focus standards at each grade level or grade band. The Common Formative Assessment process provides teachers and administrators (as well as students and parents) with feedback on student learning, allowing the schools to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes.

The CRSD's Common Formative Assessments will be administered using Discovery Education's "Progress Zone" (PZ) online assessment tool. Teachers have had access to the tool since the beginning of the school year, and many of them have used PZ assessments to measure student learning on individual lessons and activities, providing students with practice using the online tool.

The most critical component of the Common Formative Assessment process is discussion of the assessment results among teachers and administrators, and adjustment to classroom instruction to ensure that all students are mastering the standards and learning the content. As a result of conversations at faculty meetings and early-release day workshops, school staff will be better equipped to make decisions about students needing intervention (Question #4) and enrichment (Question #5).

## THE CFA: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, AND WHERE?

CRSD students at all grades levels, K-12, will participate in quarterly Common Formative Assessments (CFAs). The assessments window will occur during or immediately following the end of each quarter of the school year. Teachers will schedule the actual assessment session for their group of students within the CFA window, with the assessment taking approximately one class period to complete. The CFAs are not timed, but for most students the assessment will take 40-50 minutes. Depending on the school site,

available resources, and a student's grade level, the CFA may be administered using laptop computers in the classroom or in a computer lab setting.

Because the October 2012 assessment marks our first Common Formative Assessment in the district, administrators and teachers will be paying careful attention to what works and what needs tweaking when it comes to protocols and procedures during the test administration sessions and during follow-up data review meetings. Feedback from the school sites during this initial

assessment will allow us to adjust and adapt so that our CFAs result in valuable feedback for administrators, teachers, parents, and students.





## WHAT ABOUT THE RESULTS?

The primary purpose of a Common Formative Assessment is to *inform* and *guide* classroom instruction. Principals and teachers at each school will carefully review student performance on the CFAs to determine what must happen next in the classroom: Did a number of students in the class perform poorly on a certain standard? If so, the teacher knows she must re-teach the content using a new approach. Did an individual student struggle with a number of questions on the assessment? In that case, the team of teachers reviewing the data may decide that additional support is necessary for that student. Did a student “ace” the assessment and, combined with performance on other class assignments and tests, appear to already have mastered the standards and content? If so, the team may determine the student needs additional enrichment in the classroom.

Bottom line is that the data generated by a Common Formative Assessment is meant to provide teachers, principals, and district administration with information that will help us adjust our instructional programs to best meet the needs of all students in the district. In addition, parents may find the information interesting as they support student learning at home. The district has a responsibility to provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum to *all* students, and CFAs will help us ensure that all students have learned what it is our Board of Education has determined they need to know.

Individual student results will not be sent home but will be available for parents to review with classroom teachers at conferences in October. Sharing this information during conferences will allow teachers to answer questions about specific grade-level curriculum expectations, content, and standards.

## STANDARDS & CURRICULUM

In June of 2012, Alaska adopted new standards for English Language Arts; Mathematics; and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects that are nearly identical to the Common Core State Standards — a set of rigorous, content-rich standards that has been formally adopted in 45 states and 3 territories.

While Alaska’s Standards Based Assessments and High School Graduation Qualifying Exam will continue to measure mastery of the “old” Grade

Level Expectations (GLEs) through the spring of 2015 or 2016, the new standards are in place and are being taught in CRSD classrooms. In fact, CRSD students were first exposed to the new, more rigorous standards in the fall of 2010 when we first adopted the Common Core State Standards as a district. Because the new standards are far more rigorous than the state’s previous GLEs, students whose teachers are focusing on the new standards are learning far *more* than was previously expected.

### QUESTIONS? NEED MORE INFORMATION?

For general additional information about assessment in the CRSD, please contact:

**Tamara Van Wyhe**

Director of Teaching & Learning Support  
822-3234 ext. 233  
tvanwyhe@crsd.us

For school-specific information regarding testing times and administration details, contact your school’s principal or lead teacher:

**Copper Center School**

Byron Rice, Principal  
822-5356 / brice@crsd.us

**Glennallen School**

Susy McKenzie, Principal  
822-5286 / smckenzie@crsd.us

**Kenny Lake School**

Stacey Stansell, Principal  
822-3870 / sstansell@crsd.us

**Slana School**

Linda Bates, Lead Teacher  
822-5868 / lbates@crsd.us

**Upstream Learning**

Ramona Henspeter  
822-3234 ext. 226 / rhenspeter@crsd.us

## RESOURCES FOR PARENTS & STUDENTS



- Common Core State Standards Initiative Website: [www.corestand.org](http://www.corestand.org)
- Alaska’s New Standards for English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Literacy in the Content Areas: [www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/2012AKStandards.html](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/2012AKStandards.html)
- Parents’ Guides to Student Success (prepared by National PTA): [www.pta.org/5307.htm](http://www.pta.org/5307.htm)
- Discovery Education: [www.discoveryeducation.com](http://www.discoveryeducation.com) (Free parent resources are available at the bottom of the Discovery Education homepage. Additional content is available to students when they log in.)
- Alaska’s Digital Pipeline / Resources for Students: <http://sled.alaska.edu/databases/>
- Khan Academy: [www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org)
- IXL Math: [www.ixl.com](http://www.ixl.com)