

**PTA connects** families, schools and communities. PTA also helps ensure that parents have a seat at the table when important decisions that affect schools are made. PTA works to improve the education, health and safety of all children. Just by joining PTA you show your children that school matters, and that you are invested in their success.

## Education Edition



**T**hree decades of research proves that students achieve higher grades, have better attendance and more consistently complete homework when parents and caregivers are engaged. Changes in education such as the new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs), new state standards and assessments are ushering in a new era in which family engagement is more important than ever.

You have an opportunity to make your voice heard! Learn more about how you can help your child succeed this school year.

### FIND OUT MORE

New assessments and score reports for student success!  
Pages 6-9

### INSIDE



**Three Education Trends You Need to Know,**  
page 3



**Assessments/ Understanding the Score Reports,**  
page 6



**California State Standards,**  
page 10

# Every family is part of the **PTA**<sup>®</sup> family!

**PTA** believes family is the basic unit of society responsible for the support and nurturing of all children, and we recognize that “the family” may be defined in many ways. So no matter who’s in your family or how you define it, your family is part of the national family millions of members strong – PTA!



## Your PTA membership **MAKES** a difference

Just by joining PTA you show your children that school matters, and that you are invested in their success. Here are just a few benefits of belonging to PTA:

- **Get Connected.** There’s no better way to know what’s happening in your school, or to develop a relationship with your child’s teacher and principal.
- **Discover Great Resources.** PTA offers a variety of unique programs and materials for students, parents, families, schools and communities.
- **Speak Up.** PTA gives you a “seat at the table” when important decisions are made about your child’s school.
- **Be a Role Model.** By becoming a PTA member, you demonstrate to your child the importance you place on education.
- **Enjoy Extra Benefits.** PTA members enjoy exclusive money-saving member perks including discounts on school supplies, rental cars, amusement parks and more.
- **Make a Difference!** By working together, PTA members have helped advance local, state and national laws and policies to improve the education, health and safety of all children.

**PTA membership is open to everyone:** It doesn’t matter if you’re a parent, student, educator, business leader or community member.



## If you care about kids, join PTA!

# Three education trends you need to know this school year



## 1 FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IS KEY TO STUDENT SUCCESS

Decades of research prove family engagement is key to your child's success in school – and in life! Your engagement in your child's life – reading together, monitoring homework, ensuring attendance, working with teachers, asking questions about your child's day and joining PTA — impacts student success far more than your income, education or ZIP code. Students with engaged families attend school regularly, perform better in school, earn higher grades, pass their classes, develop better social skills and go on to college and other educational opportunities.

## 2 HEALTHY KIDS ARE BETTER LEARNERS

There's a critical link between health and student achievement. Families, teachers and researchers know that our kids can't grow, learn and succeed when they're not healthy. You can help ensure healthy children – and successful learners – by providing nutritious meals and health care, staying on top of health developments, and staying in touch with your local PTA for the latest information on health issues and programs at your children's schools.

## 3 EDUCATION CHANGES HELP ALL STUDENTS

From a newly revised funding formula to new learning standards and assessments, California's schools are undergoing historic changes all designed to help students succeed. And understanding how school systems work – such as through the California State PTA's School Smarts Parent Engagement Program – increases the likelihood of parent and community involvement, which makes education even more effective and responsive for all children.



*“Just like the ABC's, family engagement, student health and the changing landscape of education all go together to spell success for California kids – it's that simple!”*

– California State PTA President  
Justine Fischer

### LEARN MORE

For information on these three education trends and more, visit [capta.org](http://capta.org).



# Six key ways you can make a difference for your child and school

Changes in education such as the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) as well as new state standards and assessments are ushering in a new era in which parent and family engagement is more important than ever. You have a seat at the table when key decisions are being made at your child's school and in the school district. Here are six ways\* you can get involved to make a difference for your child and school:

## **1 Model positive parenting and support learning at home.**

Develop effective parenting skills and seek to better understand child and adolescent development. Create a home environment that supports learning by establishing a quiet place for homework, setting a regular time for studying. Know your teacher's homework policy and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home. Engage in conversations with your child about college and careers.

## **2 Learn more about your child's school and communicate with educators.**

Attend parent-teacher conferences and events at your child's school. Find out how to take advantage of your school's translation and interpretation services. Make time to read newsletters, notices and memos from the school. Ask your school if it offers California State PTA's School Smarts Parent Engagement Program and, if not, ask about bringing it to your school community.



## Increase engagement, achievement at your school with the **School Smarts Parent Engagement Program!**



School Smarts is an award-winning, research-based program that helps parents help their children and their school. Featuring a seven-session parent academy with sessions on education, communication and leadership, the program emphasizes art activities and discussions to build inclusiveness among parents and school leaders.

To bring **School Smarts** to your school, contact your PTA or principal or write [schoolsmarts@capta.org](mailto:schoolsmarts@capta.org).



*“Learning begins at home, then at school, then back home – it’s just a cycle. School Smarts taught me how to get involved, to understand the school system, to know my children’s progress and what they’re learning.”*

– Marivic Quiba, Parent

### **3 Help out at school or join PTA.**

Look at ways to volunteer in the classroom or other ways you can help prepare or organize classroom materials at home. Find out about school organizations, initiatives and school committees such as PTA, School Site Council or English Learner Advisory Committees (ELAC). Help with a school-wide event or accompany your child on a class field trip. And remember: Just joining PTA shows you support your child and school.

### **4 Engage in the decision-making, leadership and advocacy efforts at your school.**

Learn about the various school, district or community decision-making bodies. Your input is critical. Learn more about your school district’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and the eight priority areas that help all children succeed. Consider taking on a leadership role in speaking up for all children – at your PTA, at the school and beyond.

### **5 Be familiar with what your child will be expected to learn and how he or she will be assessed as part of the new state standards.**

Attend meetings and/or read more about California’s new state standards and how they will help prepare students for the future. Find out more about the new statewide assessment program, how your child’s score will look and what it means for your child’s progress. Talk to your child’s teacher to understand how learning will look different in the classroom and how you can best support your child.

### **6 Take advantage of community resources.**

Ask your school about free or low-cost community health, cultural and social support programs. Find out about after-school enrichment programs, tutoring and free library programs that are available to you and your family.

\*Adapted from Joyce Epstein’s model for family and community partnerships as part of the California State PTA School Smarts Parent Engagement Program.

# New assessments strengthen student success

Revamped tests reflect each child's needs and goals



California's education landscape is changing, and so is the way we measure student learning.

Gone are the days of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-bubble tests. Today's assessments are high-tech opportunities for our kids to show what they really know through communication, critical thinking and problem-solving — real skills needed for real-world success.

California's new assessment program — called the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) — represents the next step in our state's ambitious education remodeling project. In 2014-15, California schools replaced their old tests with new assessments built to let parents and teachers know how well students are learning the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in today's world.

This year will be the second year of full implementation of the new assessments. Spring 2016 testing will take place mostly in April and May, depending on school district calendars.

## SCORE REPORTS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **The new scores look different – that’s OK!** Scores changed as of 2015, and they can’t be compared to the previous STAR scores. The new CAASPP assessment report uses four achievement levels: standard not met, standard nearly met, standard met, standard exceeded. The levels designate the degree of “progress toward mastery of the knowledge and skills needed for success in future coursework.” For 11<sup>th</sup>-graders, they measure the degree to which students are on track to be ready for college or a career after graduating from high school.
- **The scores help improve learning for your child!** Scores give teachers the opportunity to adjust instruction and give students and parents an idea of which areas should get extra attention each school year and which areas students have mastered.
- **Like a growth chart, the tests, scores and results change with your child’s age and grade.** As children grow and change, so do the educational standards and related assessments. Although you can see growth from year to year, scores can’t be directly compared to prior years, which measured different grade standards.
- **The scores are just one measure of how your child is doing.** These new tests are part of an overall system of assessment including classroom assignments, quizzes, report cards and more.
- **Ask questions!** The score reports will likely go to parents much earlier this year than last. Parents can start discussions on the score reports with their child’s teacher either before going to summer break or during back-to-school season and during parent-teacher conferences and other meetings and communications in the fall.



## EXTRA INFO FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS!

Knowing your child’s achievement level at the end of 11<sup>th</sup> grade gives you the opportunity to use their senior high-school year to improve skills for entry into college or career technical education after high school. But no matter what your child’s future plans are, taking steps to prepare before graduation is important to future success. A significant benefit for students who perform at “standard exceeded” on the assessments is that your child will be exempt from taking the California State University (CSU) and some participating California Community College (CCC) placement tests. This will allow your child to move directly into many college-level courses upon enrollment. Students who perform at “standard met” will be encouraged to take appropriate courses in their senior year in order to move directly to college-level courses or career training.

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Find out more at  
[www.csusuccess.org](http://www.csusuccess.org).

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

The student assessment score reports offer a great opportunity to ask questions:

- **Ask Your Child:** What areas do you think you should focus on, based on your test scores? What do you see as your strengths to build on?
- **Ask Your Teacher:** How will these tests scores be used to guide instruction? How can I help my child be successful?
- **Ask Your Principal:** Are the scores being used for school-decision making? What did you learn from the overall results?
- **Ask Your Superintendent:** Are the district assessment scores helping guide professional development? What is the district doing to implement the new state standards?

## WHAT THE REPORT MEANS

Your child's student score report consists of two pages, both of which are personalized for your child.

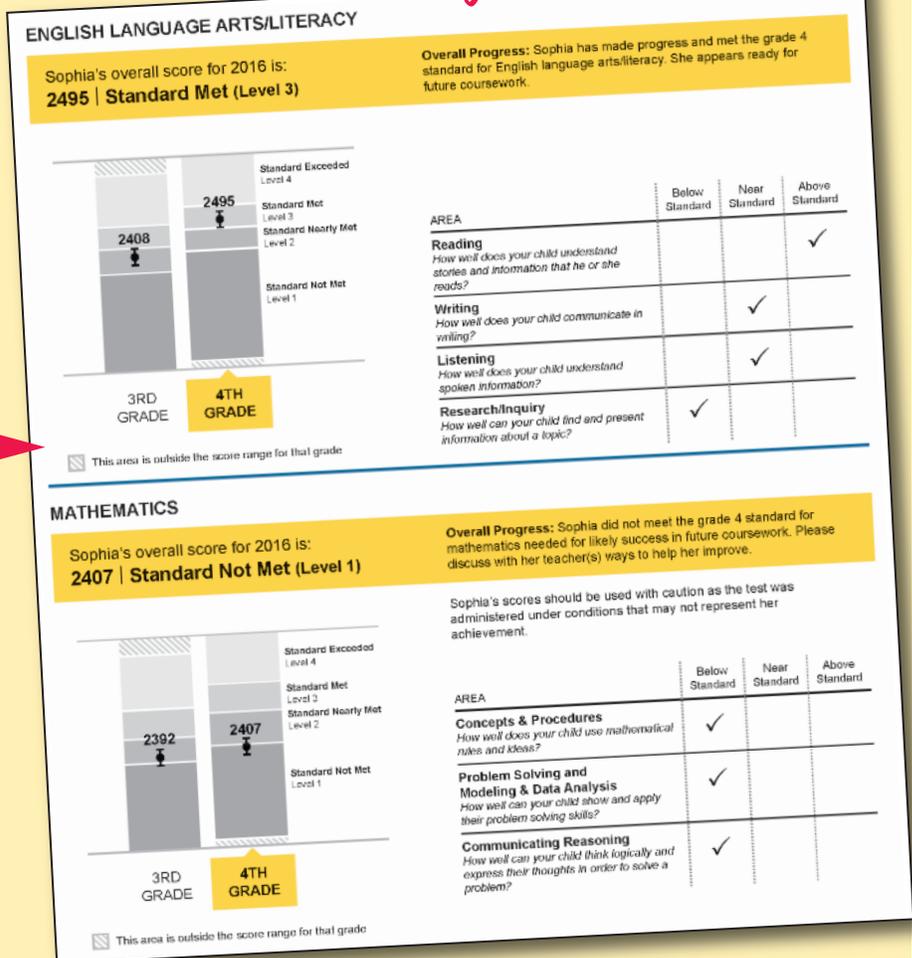
These detailed scores and materials better reflect your child's progress and provide opportunities to work together with educators to ensure student success.

For more information visit [capta.org/assessments](http://capta.org/assessments).

### PAGE ONE INCLUDES:

- Scores representing your child's overall performance in English language arts and in mathematics from this year assessment as well as from last year. The numerical score is indicated by a dot as well as bar showing likely scores if the assessment was taken multiple times.
- Like progress on a growth chart, the tests, scores and expectations change with your child's age and grade. Scores are expected to increase from year to year, so achievement levels get higher as your child grows.
- A breakdown of four areas of English language arts, describing your child's performance on reading, writing, listening and research/inquiry portions of the assessment.
- A breakdown of the three areas of mathematics, detailing your child's performance on concepts and procedures, problem solving/modeling/data analysis, and communicating reasoning.

*New for 2016*



### PAGE TWO INCLUDES:

- A letter from the state superintendent about your child's assessment and score report.
- The numerical score levels for "standard not met," "standard nearly met," "standard met" and "standard exceeded."
- Additional information based on your child's grade such as the California Standards Test for Grades 5 and 8 Science or the Early Assessment Program (EAP) Status for Grade 11.

# NEW ASSESSMENTS HELP YOUR CHILD SUCCEED

- **Measure real-world skills.** To be ready for college and the workplace, your child needs to apply knowledge and skills through critical thinking, analytical writing and problem solving. The new assessments in math and English-language arts measure the skills students need to know when they graduate.
- **End teaching to the test.** The new assessments include activities that more closely mirror what your child is learning in class. They provide a more accurate understanding of student knowledge than previous tests because they ask students to show and apply what they know, instead of just picking the right answer from a multiple-choice question.
- **Identify whether students are on the path to success.** You should be able to know whether your child has the knowledge and skills needed to advance to the next stage for that subject. The new assessments provide an academic check-up and help teachers and parents know whether students are on track to be college- and career-ready at each grade level.
- **Use technology to provide better information for teachers and parents.** Online tests include a greater variety of questions and are more secure than paper tests. The tests adapt to each student's responses, moving to easier or more difficult questions so they better gauge the student's level of understanding.
- **Provide opportunities for early intervention.** Teachers have access to interim assessments that can be administered during the year to check on student progress. When teachers have information about your child's strengths and needs, they can better support your child's learning.
- **Replace state tests in English and math.** Created by experts and educators, the new assessments replace previous STAR tests in English and math.
- **Support students with special needs.** New assessments include resources to help English learners and students with disabilities demonstrate what they know and can do.

If you have questions about the new assessments, feel free to contact your child's teacher, school or PTA. We're all here to help your child succeed!



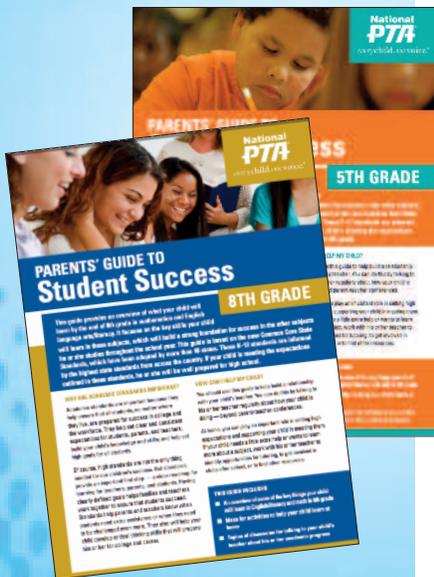
— VISIT —  
**[CAPTA.ORG/RESOURCES](http://CAPTA.ORG/RESOURCES)**  
For free assessment-score guides from the California Department of Education and California State PTA!



# Digging Deeper: California's New Standards in English Language Arts and Math

California's new state standards in English language arts and math are part of an overall update to the way our schools ensure all students achieve. They provide deeper, richer and more relevant instruction with clearly-defined learning goals for each grade level to help prepare your child – and every child – to successfully navigate our changing world.

**Here are a few great resources to learn more about the new standards and how to help your child this school year:**



## ■ California Department of Education

Read the standards and search a collection of resources to support implementation. [www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/)

- There's also a section with resources and guidelines for the special education community. [www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/cc/](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/cc/)

## ■ California State PTA's *Parents' Guide to Student Success*

A four-page guide for each grade level, includes highlights of the standards, ideas to support learning at home and questions to ask your child's teacher. Available in six languages. [www.capta.org/commoncore](http://www.capta.org/commoncore)

## ■ Council of Great City Schools Parent Roadmap

See three-year snapshots showing how selected standards progress from year to year so your children will be college- and career-ready upon their graduation from high school. [www.cgcs.org/Domain/36](http://www.cgcs.org/Domain/36)

## ■ Ed100.org

Explore California's education system in easy-to-understand language. [www.ed100.org](http://www.ed100.org)

## ■ The Homework Help Desk

Have a question about your child's homework? Search by grade or by topic, browse through instructional videos or ask a question of your own. [www.thehomeworkhelpdesk.org](http://www.thehomeworkhelpdesk.org)

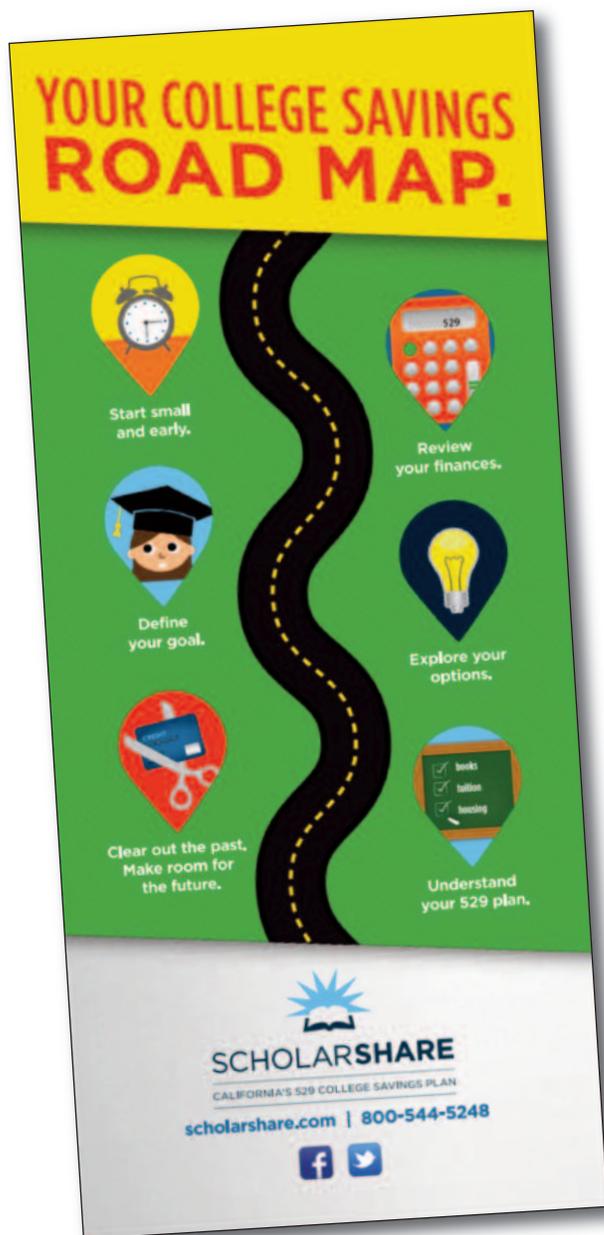
## ■ Be a Learning Hero

This National PTA-sponsored site provides tips, fast facts and guides to help your child including skill builders designed to help improve your child's skills in areas where they need support. [www.bealearninghero.org/skill-builder](http://www.bealearninghero.org/skill-builder)

# Start Thinking about College (And How to Pay for It)

It's never too early – or too late – to plan for your child's college future and to develop your college-savings road map!

California State PTA and ScholarShare, California's 529 College Savings Plan, are teaming up to raise awareness about the importance of saving for college. Here are a few steps you can take to develop a college savings road map for your child:



## Start Small and Early

The task of saving for college can be overwhelming, but the sooner you get started, the greater the likelihood that your child will go to college and have the funds to pay for it. Various studies show that a child with a college savings account is 6 to 7 times more likely to attend college. The key is to get started.

## Review Your Finances

Saving for college can be daunting. That's why it's important to take a careful look at your finances and identify any available funds that you can regularly contribute to your college savings. No contribution is too small. Every little bit helps.

## Define Your Goal

Paying for 100 percent of a child's future college expenses may not be a realistic goal for some parents. Fortunately, the share you save is only a part of a larger strategy to help pay for college. Define a goal that makes sense for your family and plan accordingly.

## Understand Your 529 Plan

A 529 plan is a state-sponsored, tax-advantaged savings plan designed to help families save for college. The State of California offers the ScholarShare College Savings Plan. In addition to the many benefits, you can open a ScholarShare account with just \$25. Visit [scholarshare.com](http://scholarshare.com) to learn more.

## Additional Resources

Many free resources are available to help with career research and college planning. School counselors are your go-to source of current information on employment and colleges. Taking a little time to meet with a school counselor can mean a lot of help with job ideas, assessments to gauge your child's career interests, vocational/technical schools and much more. Your school or local library are other helpful free resources for your future plans.

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**The mission of the California State PTA is  
to positively impact the lives of all children and families.**

*Adopted August 2013*



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## Come for the convention

### Stay for the vacation

Featuring nationally renowned motivational speakers, energizing workshops and engaging activities, the 2017 California State PTA Annual Convention is the place to connect for student success!



**April 28-30, 2017 in San Jose**  
[capta.org/convention](http://capta.org/convention)



## There's only one PTA!

Part of school, family and neighborhood life for more than 115 years, PTA is the defining organization for family engagement. If your school isn't yet part of PTA, you can start a PTA and continue our century-long legacy of advocacy for children, families and communities.

[capta.org](http://capta.org)