



SMARTER BALANCED FACT SHEET

WHAT IS SMARTER BALANCED?

Smarter Balanced is a state-led consortium working collaboratively to develop assessments aligned to the **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** that accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENTS?

- In ELA/literacy, many states don't assess writing and few assess critical-thinking skills. SMARTER BALANCED will do both.
- In math, most current assessments are fill-in-the-blank "bubble tests." SMARTER BALANCED will give students a chance to solve real problems. Plus, they'll not only have to solve complex problems, but also show how they solved them.
- Many current state tests measure only lower-level skills. The new assessments are designed to measure whether students are actually on track for college or careers.
- Most current tests just require students to fill in the blanks. SMARTER BALANCED's computer-based assessments will be much more interactive and engaging.
- Too often, current tests fail to adequately measure the skills and knowledge of students working significantly below or beyond their grade level. SMARTER BALANCED assessments will.
- The new tests will create comparability among states and equity among the students who reside in them. What it means to be ready for success in college or careers shouldn't vary from state to state.

WHEN WILL THE SMARTER BALANCED BE ADMINISTERED?

The assessments will be implemented during the 2014-2015 school year for students in grades 3-11 and will eventually replace the statewide tests that students take now in math and reading.

The SMARTER BALANCED assessments have two components: The Performance Based Assessment (PBA) will be administered in February and March and the End of Year Assessment (EOY) will be administered in April and May.

ARE OUR TEACHERS TRAINED?

Yes, they have been receiving trainings about Common Core and SMARTER BALANCED assessments for the last 2 years.

WHAT IS THE TESTING TIME SCHEDULE?

There are many pieces to the PBAs, but the following sample SMARTER BALANCED test provides an example.

Test Type	Grades	CAT	Perf Task Only	Total	In-Class Activity	Total
English Language Arts/Literacy	3-5	1:30	2:00	3:30	:30	4:00
	6-8	1:30	2:00	3:30	:30	4:00
	11	2:00	2:00	4:00	:30	4:30
Mathematics	3-5	1:30	1:00	2:30	:30	3:00
	6-8	2:00	1:00	3:00	:30	3:30
	11	2:00	1:30	3:30	:30	4:00
COMBINED	3-5	3:00	3:00	6:00	1:00	7:00
	6-8	3:30	3:00	6:30	1:00	7:30
	11	4:00	3:30	7:30	1:00	8:30

WHAT CAN PARENTS EXPECT FROM THE SMARTER BALANCED RESULTS?

Both the new SMARTER BALANCED assessments and the Common Core standards are new and have a new method of scoring. Therefore, it is not possible to directly compare the new scores to old scores by state.

The new assessments measure deeper knowledge and skills deemed particularly important for students' futures, including problem-solving, writing, and critical thinking.

It is precisely because these standards are more rigorous that student achievement scores may initially be lower. A dip, however, should not be interpreted as a decline in student learning or educator performance. It is expected that short-term declines will be reversed as teachers, students, and other educators gain experience with the new standards and assessments.

WILL THERE BE ANY PAPER AND PENCIL TASKS OR WILL IT ALL BE ADMINISTERED ELECTRONICALLY?

SMARTER BALANCED will be administered electronically. However, SMARTER BALANCED will make paper and pencil assessments for those students that require them due to a need.

ARE TEST BLUEPRINTS AVAILABLE?

SMARTER BALANCED released assessment blueprints and accompanying materials in April 2013 for both English language arts/literacy and mathematics at all grade levels.

These tools show how the assessments reflect and measure the Common Core at every grade level. Educators can use the blueprints, combined with other SMARTER BALANCED tools - including the SMARTER BALANCED Model Content Frameworks,

assessment claims, evidence statements, sample items and performance-level descriptors — to support quality implementation of the standards.

The blueprints are available online at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/>

DOES MY SCHOOL HAVE ENOUGH TECHNOLOGY TO ADMINISTER THE TEST?

- Our schools do have enough technology to administer SMARTER BALANCED.
- SMARTER BALANCED has kept the tests “device-neutral,” so districts won’t need to purchase specific devices to administer the tests and so the devices can be used throughout the school year.
- Desktops, laptops, netbooks (Windows, Mac, Chrome and Linux), tablets (iPad, Windows and Android) and thin client computers will be compatible provided they are configured to meet the established hardware, operating system and networking specifications — and are able to address the security requirements described in the Security Considerations section of the SMARTER BALANCED Technology Guidelines.
- More information can be found at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>

WILL SCHOOLS HAVE ACCESS TO PRACTICE TESTS AND WILL STUDENTS HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE?

The SMARTER BALANCED site has a practice test that teachers and students are using to get familiarized to the test. The SMARTER BALANCED will also release an interim test in Fall 2014.

WHAT ARE RESOURCES TO GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SMARTER BALANCED?

Sample items and tasks for math and ELA/literacy — along with a range of supplementary materials and additional resources — are available at

- SMARTER BALANCED website: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org>
- Sample Test Items: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks>
- SMARTER BALANCED Pilot Testing: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/field-test/>
- Concept Schools aligns Accommodations for Student Sub-Groups such as those with disabilities; health needs and who are English as a Second Language Learners:

-http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/SmarterBalanced_Guidelines_091113.pdf

▪ Common Core Standards: <http://www.corestandards.org/>

HOW IS MY SCHOOL PREPARING FOR SMARTER BALANCED?

Teachers and school leadership have been working for the past few years to ready themselves for the 2014-2015 school year transition by:

- deconstructing and learning the new standards;
- planning instruction that reflects the necessary instructional shifts required to master the rigor like citing evidence and reading more complex texts;
- balancing instruction with information text (non-fiction) and fiction readings in all subjects;
- focusing on fact fluency and problem solving in math; and
- Increasing focus on technology skills such as typing, “click and drag,” and using multiple windows at a time.

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM OUR PARENTS?

Spend some time with your students on a regular, timely basis. Reading well will be key on these new SMARTER BALANCED assessments. Read all kinds of materials with them such as newspapers, magazines, billboards, charts, labels on products at the store, on-line websites, and of course, stories.

We know that when you are reading with them and solving math problems it will be necessary for them to practice the following:

- Find the correct answers, but also be able to show where they found it. This is called citing evidence, and they can get better at it if you say, “How did you know that?” or “Where did you find the answer in what we just read?”
- Solving problems in math is really important, but being able to explain the steps they take to solve a problem will be really important too. When reviewing math problems have them explain to you, or write down, what they did to solve the problem. It is also important that students practice math facts and operation fluency.
- Technology will play a big role in the new SMARTER BALANCED assessments so students are encouraged to practice typing and using the mouse at home if you have family computer.