

A Smarter Measure

New state standards are challenging students to understand subject matter more deeply, think more critically, and apply their learning to the real world. These college- and career-ready standards spell out the math, reading, and writing skills students need to learn grade-by-grade to be on a path for success after high school. Recognizing the need for better ways to measure these writing, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills, states across the country banded together to create the Smarter Balanced Assessment System. The Consortium consists of 15 states, one territory, and the Bureau of Indian Education, as well as three affiliate members.

A Balanced System

The mission of Smarter Balanced is to improve teaching and learning by providing high-quality information, tools, and resources to support teachers and students. The Smarter Balanced system includes end-of-year tests that give students, parents, and educators better information about how they are progressing. However, Smarter Balanced isn't just an end-of-year accountability test; it also features optional interim assessments to use throughout the year and a rich Digital Library of tools, practices, and professional development resources to support teachers.

Created by Educators for Students

The Smarter Balanced assessments were developed through collaboration with educators and administrators. Smarter Balanced assessments offer significant improvements over tests of the past, including writing at every grade, more open-ended questions instead of multiple choice, and questions that allow students to demonstrate real research, writing, and problem-solving skills. Taking advantage of the power of technology, the assessments also feature state-of-the-art accommodations for students with varied learning abilities.

Smarter Balanced was developed by teachers for students. More than 4,700 educators contributed to the creation of the Smarter Balanced system. Teachers contributed at each step of the development of Smarter Balanced, from helping to write the actual test questions, to creating the tools in its Digital Library, to deciding the appropriate achievement levels to show a student has met the standards.



Best of the Best

Educators looked at the best existing tests, as well as emerging, innovative testing practices in order to create Smarter Balanced assessments. Taking from the “best of the best” assessments, Smarter Balanced asks students to complete performance tasks to show how they can solve problems, not just get the right answer. The assessments are adaptive, online, and student-driven, and they use a design platform that all students can navigate.

To assist states in supporting their at-risk students, the assessments include video accommodations for American Sign Language and embedded supports such as glossaries translated into 10 languages and 600,000 audio files. The assessments have been fully translated into Spanish and thousands of test items were given the stamp of approval from patrons on a bias and sensitivity committee.

Lead by Members

Smarter Balanced is a multi-state partnership, owned and operated by its 17 governing members. Smarter Balanced is committed to an unprecedented level of transparency as all members work together, and voting jointly on key decisions. All members have a voice in Smarter Balanced. Each member appoints K–12 and higher education leads to coordinate with the Consortium. The Executive Committee is elected from members and guides the work of the Consortium.

All of the key documents describing the assessment (item specifications, item writing training materials, test blueprints, accommodations framework, achievement level descriptors, technology specifications, etc.) are available to the public on the Smarter Balanced website (www.SmarterBalanced.org).

By the Numbers

6.8 million
students

took the 2015
summative assessment
in 18 states, the US Virgin
Islands, and the Bureau
of Indian Education.

4,700
educators

helped develop and
review test questions,
set achievement
levels, and develop
the Digital Library.

33,000
test items

consisting of questions
and performance
tasks have been
created to date.

Learn More

Visit our website www.SmarterBalanced.org for more information.

You can also try out the test software and answer sample questions on the **Practice Test**:
www.SmarterBalanced.org/assessments/practice-and-training-tests/.