

New Hampshire's Statewide Assessment: Smarter Balanced *Frequently Asked Questions for Parents*

Why is my child taking a new assessment this year?

- New Hampshire is replacing its existing NECAP tests with an assessment that more closely measures a student's understanding of academic content and skills in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.
- The new assessment is called Smarter Balanced and it provides an **academic checkup** for students by measuring real-world skills like analytical reading, persuasive writing and problem solving.
- The new assessment is given online and will provide a better picture of **where students are succeeding and where they need help** as compared to previous statewide assessments.
- Parents can access complete **Practice Tests** in ELA and mathematics for grades 3 through 8 and 11 at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>.

How long will the assessments take?

- The Smarter Balanced Assessments are not timed, but it is estimated that the English language arts/literacy assessment will take 4 (for elementary students) to 4 ½ hours (for high school students) and the math assessment will take 3 hours (for elementary students) to 4 hours (for high school students). In addition, students will have a brief classroom activity to introduce the topic of the performance task. Testing will occur in multiple sessions, so students will typically spend 1 to 2 hours per day on the assessments over a few days.
- The English language arts/literacy and mathematics assessments each have two components:
 - Computer-adaptive assessments: A set of assessment questions in a variety of formats that will be **customized to each student** based on answers to previous questions. In this way, the assessments can most accurately **measure each student's knowledge and skills**.
 - Performance tasks: Collections of questions and activities that are coherently connected to a single theme or scenario. These activities are meant to measure capacities such as **depth of understanding, writing and research skills, and complex analysis**, which cannot be adequately assessed with traditional test questions. The performance tasks will be taken on a computer (but will not be computer-adaptive) and will take one to two class periods to complete.



Will I notice a difference in my student's test scores this year from when they took the old NECAP?

- That is possible, but not a certainty. It is important to keep in mind:
 - Lower test scores do not mean that students have learned less or fallen behind academically.
 - **When the bar is raised**, as it has been in many school districts, more is expected in order for students to **demonstrate mastery** in their knowledge and skills.
 - Proficiency rates (test scores) on **new assessments may not be comparable to previous assessments**; however, over time, consistent and comparable measures of student achievement often show significant progress.

What is the Smarter Balanced “Field Test?”

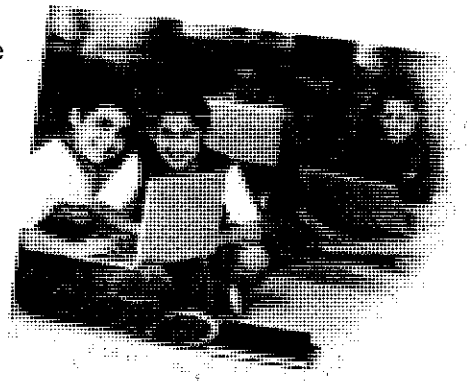
- Smarter Balanced assessments were “field tested” in spring 2014 and will be fully operational in the Spring of 2015.
- The “practice run” helped ensure that the assessments are accurate and fair for all students. It also gave teachers and schools a chance to practice assessment administration procedures, and students the opportunity to experience the new assessments.
- The field test included **11,000 students in New Hampshire** and four million students across the country.
- Smarter Balanced states will use information from the Field Test to improve the assessments.
- In any practice run, we expected glitches to occur. Working together with teachers and school administrators, we will address issues identified prior to the full launch of the assessment system in the spring of 2015.

What consequences will occur if I do not allow my child to participate in these assessments?

- Assessments help to provide **valuable information** to parents, teachers and students.
- Ultimately, the greatest penalty for avoiding these assessments is not being able to use this measure to provide meaningful information on where your student stands on their path to success.
- The state will continue, as required, to report its student participation rate in the statewide assessment by school, district and state. The target participation rate is 95 percent of students taking the statewide assessment.
- The state, school districts and schools **do not** currently have any authority to waive or “opt-out” a student from the statewide assessment.

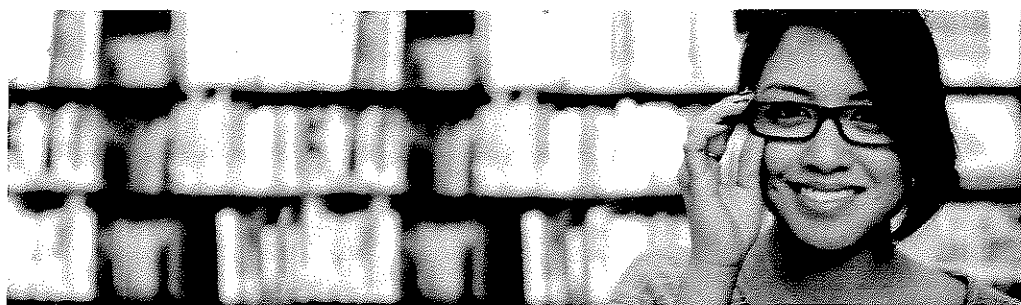
How will my child’s privacy be protected?

- New Hampshire has one of the **strongest student data privacy laws** in the country.
- Smarter Balanced will not collect information such as student names, dates of birth, addresses, etc. that can be used to identify individual students. No parent information will be collected.
- Further, use of the Smarter Balanced Assessment will result in no changes to state reporting to the U.S. Department of Education, which includes not sending personally identifiable student data information.
- Smarter Balanced, NH DOE and local districts cannot and will not sell student information, as prohibited by federal laws, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.



My child has special needs. Will these assessments work for my child?

- The Smarter Balanced assessment system will provide accurate measures of achievement and growth for students with disabilities and English language learners. The assessments will address visual, auditory, and physical access barriers—as well as the unique needs of English language learners—allowing virtually all students to demonstrate what they know and can do.
- Smarter Balanced assessments feature the most complete suite of accessibility and accommodation resources ever included in a K–12 assessment, including universal tools to assist all students, designated supports to meet student needs identified by school personnel, and accommodations for students with a documented need noted in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan. For more information and a complete list of features, see the *Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines* at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/parents-students/support-for-under-represented-students/>.
- For English language learners, the math assessments feature embedded glossaries in 10 languages and 4 dialects, as well as full stacked translation in Spanish.
- Features for students with documented disabilities include Braille, closed captioning, and videos of American Sign Language interpreters.
- Students with severe cognitive disabilities will still be offered an alternate assessment option through the students IEP process.



Parents' Guide to New English Language Arts and Mathematics **ASSESSMENTS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE**

In July 2010, New Hampshire adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In New Hampshire, the CCSS, as well as other state content standards, are known as the New Hampshire College and Career Ready Standards (NH CCRS). The state's new standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn in English language arts and mathematics as they progress through grades K-12.

In the 2014-15 school year, New Hampshire will begin rolling out new assessments aligned to the CCSS. The new assessments are being used to gauge how well students are mastering the standards – and ultimately how ready students are for college and career education and training. In spring 2014, some schools will participate in field-testing the new assessments to ensure that the new test items are free of bias and that they challenge students working at all performance levels.

WHAT ARE NEW HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE AND CAREER READY STANDARDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS?

The New Hampshire College and Career Ready Standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics are designed to enhance and improve student learning. The standards have greater clarity and rigor than most previous standards. They are relevant to the real world, giving young people the knowledge and skills they need for college and career success. They are also robust, ensuring a future U.S. workforce that can compete in the global economy.

The new standards emphasize fewer topics and stress not only procedural skills, but also conceptual and critical thinking. The standards build knowledge from grade to grade, enabling students to master important concepts before moving on to others.

The standards are not a curriculum. Decisions about curriculum, tools, materials, and textbooks are left to local districts and schools that know their students best.

The CCSS were developed through a state-led initiative, spearheaded by governors and state commissioners

in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, college faculty, parents, and education experts. They build on the excellent foundation laid across all states, and have been internationally benchmarked to ensure rigor on par with top-performing nations.

To date, more than 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the CCSS.

In 2011, several New Hampshire educators began implementing the CCSS in their districts, schools, and classrooms. To prepare educators, New Hampshire partners have provided a wide range of trainings, resources, and online tools to help administrators and teachers build capacity in the instructional strategies that will support the new standards.

THIS GUIDE INCLUDES:

- Overview of new assessments, which measure student proficiency against more rigorous standards
- Sample questions
- Overview of accountability for students, teachers, and schools
- Additional resources for parents

CCSS-Aligned Assessments

WHY NEW ASSESSMENTS?

Teachers and principals talk a lot about assessments, which are used to measure students' academic achievement. This document highlights the end-of-year summative assessments, which judge student progress toward mastering state standards and program and school effectiveness. For other assessments used, see box at right.

New summative assessments will address longstanding concerns that parents, educators, and employers have had about current state assessments – namely that they measure students' ability to memorize facts, rather than their critical thinking and knowledge application skills.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THE NEW SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS?

The new assessments for English language arts and mathematics will enable educators to deepen their understanding of student progress from grade to grade—and just as importantly, identify and address any gaps in progress well before students enter college or the workforce.

Types of assessments

Classroom-based: Individual tests given by teachers as needed throughout the year to assess knowledge and skills in specific areas

Interim: The same test repeated at set intervals to measure student growth over time

Summative: End-of-year assessments administered by the state to measure student performance against a common set of standards

This document addresses summative assessments.

New English language arts assessments:

- Ask students to read more complex fiction and non-fiction texts and use evidence from these texts to answer questions, make inferences, and present persuasive arguments.
- Emphasize literacy across all subjects, not just English language arts.
- Test writing at every grade level.

New math assessments:

- Go beyond multiple-choice questions and present students with multi-step problems, conceptual questions, and real-world applications.
- Ask students to not only get answers correct, but also explain how they arrived at those answers.
- Cover fewer topics in greater depth, focusing on the most critical areas.

Benefits of new assessments

- Scores provide students, parents, and teachers with insight into college and career readiness early enough to address issues and provide extra support where needed.
- New Hampshire will transition to computer adaptive assessments, which replace pencil-and-paper tests and can adjust the difficulty of questions based on student responses. A student who answers correctly will receive a more challenging item, while an incorrect answer generates an easier question.



NOTE:

While taking advantage of technology, new assessments are designed to work with the computing resources in schools today. The assessments work fine on very old operating systems and require minimal processors and memory. States that have not yet made the transition to online testing will be offered a paper-and-pencil option for the first three years.

- New assessments will allow New Hampshire to compare student performance not only across schools and districts statewide, but also with students in other states that have adopted the Common Core.
- The new assessments are designed to provide accurate measures of achievement and growth for all students, including those with disabilities and English language

Who is developing the new assessments?

Because CCSS is a state-led initiative, most states across the country chose to join one of two consortia of states working together to develop new assessments based on Common Core State Standards. These are Smarter Balanced and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

New Hampshire is a member of Smarter Balanced, along with 25 other states and territories. Customization and final decisions about assessments remain at the state level, in partnership with local educators. Read more about Smarter Balanced at: www.smarterbalanced.org

learners—allowing these students to perform to their potential. For students with disabilities, the online assessments will address visual, auditory, and physical access barriers, enabling these students to take a test individualized to meet their needs at the same time as other students in their class. Tools have also been developed to help English language learners demonstrate their knowledge, regardless of their level of proficiency in English. The goal of the accommodations is to make the assessments more accessible and to produce results that are valid for these students, not to give them an advantage over other students.

College and Career Readiness Defined:

The level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or in a high-quality certificate program that enables students to enter a career pathway with potential future advancement.






Sample questions by grade level

The following questions are representative of those found on the new assessments. For more examples, visit www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test.

EXAMPLE OF A 5TH GRADE MATH QUESTION

SAMPLE ITEM

Five swimmers compete in a 50-meter race. The finish time for each swimmer is shown in the video.

	23.42		23.35
	23.18		23.24
	23.21		

Explain how the results of the race would change if the race used a clock that rounded to the nearest tenth.

Explanation:

EXAMPLE OF A 6TH GRADE ENGLISH QUESTION

SAMPLE ITEM

Students are asked to read the essay "Planes on the Brain" by Elisabeth Deffner, from *Faces Magazine*, and answer the following questions:

1. How does the author emphasize the point that the TAM program was a positive influence on the sisters' lives? Use details from the text to support your answer.
2. Highlight the parts of the text that provide evidence to support the idea that the Tuskegee Airmen were historically important.
3. What does the author mean by "the sky is no longer the limit"? Use details from the text to support your response.

Answer:

EXAMPLE OF A 11TH GRADE ENGLISH QUESTION

SAMPLE ITEM

The following excerpt is from a writer's first draft of a narrative essay. Read the excerpt. Then rewrite it, revising it to correct errors.

I had no idea what to expect when I walked into the arena. There were people everywhere, most of them clad in brightly colored jersey's with different players' names on the back of them. There were some names I couldnt even pronounce. Me and my friend made our way to the corridor that led to the ice rink. The minute I stepped through the doorway, I could feel a rush of cold air hit my face. I could actually smell the ice! I never thought ice had a smell, but it really does. The next thing I noticed was the size, of the ice rink. There were lines and circles painted all over it, and I knew immediately I wouldn't understand the rules. We found our seats, and it wasn't long before the game started. We sat so close to the action that I felt as if I was right in the middle of it, the action was so intense it was hard to follow the puck, keep an eye on the players, and to figure out which team was ahead. When the home team scored a goal. The entire arena erupted with cheering that was so loud, I bet it was heard across town. by the end of the game, I felt so many emotions: delight, disappointment, fear, and excitement. Mostly, though, I felt in awe of the athletes who played this game. They are much more tougher than I ever expected. I suspect others new to hockey will be as impressed as me by this fast, interesting game.

Now rewrite the excerpt, revising it to correct errors.

Answer:

What Parents Can Expect

This is a new system with a new way of scoring. Therefore, it is not possible to directly compare new scores with old scores from the NECAP assessment, which will be in use until the implementation of the new assessments.

The new assessments measure deeper knowledge and skills deemed particularly important to students' futures, including problem-solving, writing, and critical thinking. The scores provide students, parents, and teachers with the ability to address issues well before students are ready to graduate.

Because the standards are more rigorous, student achievement scores may initially be lower. A dip should not necessarily be interpreted as a decline in student learning or educator performance. Educators expect the short-term decline to reverse as teachers and students become more familiar with the standards and better equipped to meet the challenges they present.

How will schools support students during the transition?

Schools have created a variety of models to assist students who are struggling with the standards. Remediation and summer courses, in-class adjustments based on ongoing in-class assessment results, and pull-out tutoring are just a few support strategies.

► If Students Need Additional Help

If children experience a dip in progress and state test results, don't hesitate to discuss this with their teachers and work with the school to develop a plan for enrichment or improvement.

How are schools held accountable?

Currently, schools are ranked based on their cumulative achievement scores. The lowest-ranked schools receive intensive support and guidance from the Department of Education through its technical assistance networks.

Once the new assessments are implemented in 2014-2015, the Department of Education will further review its accountability plan.

How are teachers and students held accountable?

In the immediate future, if a student does not meet proficiency levels, there should be no negative consequences such as holding him or her back a year. Instead, parents can work with the school to develop an improvement plan tailored to the specific student's needs.

New Hampshire educators are evaluated and provided with professional learning support in every school throughout the state. Most schools measure, at least in part, an educator's effectiveness via student academic progress throughout the year. All schools are strongly encouraged to use multiple measures to determine student growth and achievement.

Preparing and supporting your child

- Discuss the new tests with your child. Make sure he or she is not afraid or anxious going into the new tests.
- With an older child, explain that the new assessments were created to make sure he or she is on track to succeed after graduation and to identify any issues early enough to give more support where it is needed.
- Explain to your child that the tests might initially be more challenging than previous tests. Tell your child you have high expectations and that you are there to help every step of the way.
- Review test results with your child, taking time to discuss areas of strength and areas where there is room for improvement. Bring the teacher into the discussion as needed.
- Provide a quiet, comfortable place for studying at home and make sure your child gets a good night's sleep before a test.

Staying informed and involved

- Become familiar with the NH CCRS in English language arts and mathematics.
- View samples of new test questions and get more information regarding how Smarter Balanced assessments were developed at www.smarterbalanced.org.
- Read all comments written by teachers on classroom lessons and tests. Ask teachers to explain anything that is unclear and discuss how you can best work together to address comments.
- Monitor your child's progress. If your child needs extra help or wants to learn more about a subject, work with his or her teacher to identify opportunities for tutoring, after-school clubs, or other resources.
- Understand that tests are not perfect measures of what a child can do. Scores can be affected by the way he or she is feeling on test day or the particular classroom setting. Assessments are useful but should not be the only factor in determining a child's academic growth.
- Meet with your child's teacher as often as possible to discuss your child's progress. Ask for activities to do at home to help prepare for tests and improve your child's proficiency.

Additional Resources

- For a more detailed look at what CCSS mean at each grade level: www.pta.org/parentsguide
- For more information on the implementation of CCSS in New Hampshire: www.education.nh.gov
- For more information on the Smarter Balanced consortium, of which New Hampshire is a member: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org>



TALKING POINTS: SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT

New Hampshire educators and students are transitioning from the statewide NECAP test to the new Smarter Balanced Assessment in the Spring of 2015. The implementation of the Smarter Balanced Assessment has two purposes:

1. It will provide educators, parents and students with additional information they need to continuously improve teaching and learning that will help ensure students graduate high school college- and career-ready.
2. It will provide a snapshot of academic progress to the public that will indicate how well students are mastering the knowledge and skills being taught in public schools around the state. It is important to note that schools in New Hampshire are strongly encouraged to use multiple measures of student learning to understand the effectiveness of educators.

As with any transition, many questions surface and sometimes, misinformation is repeated. This document provides a few key talking points on the most common misconceptions related to the new assessment. Please also refer to the Smarter Balanced Assessment Transition FAQ document located on the NH Department of Education's website for additional questions and answers.

The NH Department of Education (DOE) does not have the authority to provide waivers to school districts that want to "opt-out" of the statewide assessment.

New Hampshire law requires the Department of Education (NH DOE) "to establish credible process for measuring and rating schools (RSA 21-N:1, II(e))." In addition, RSA 193-C established the Statewide Educational Improvement and Assessment Program and section C:6 states, "each year, a statewide assessment shall be administered in all school districts in the state in grades 3 through 8 and one grade in high school. All public school students in the designated grades shall participate in the assessment, unless such student is exempted..." Exemptions can only be approved through the Director of Assessment at the NH DOE.

There is no provision in state law that would allow the NH DOE to provide waivers to allow schools or districts to opt-out of or postpone the implementation of the statewide assessment; nor do school districts have the authority to allow students to opt-out of the assessment unless the student meets one of the exemption criteria above. In addition, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires all districts that accept federal funds under this Act to implement the statewide assessment in order to continue the receipt of funds.

State law does not allow parents to opt their students out of the locally used/adopted standards or the statewide assessment.

Some community members and parents point to RSA 186:11 IX-c which "requires school districts to adopt a policy allowing an exception to specific course material based on a parent's or legal guardian's determination that the material is objectionable. Such policy shall include a provision requiring the parent or legal guardian to notify the school principal or designee in writing of the specific material to which they object and a provision requiring an alternative agreed upon by the school district and the parent, at the parent's expense, sufficient to enable the child to meet state requirements for education in the particular subject area." For example, if a parent objects to a particular book being read in a class, the parent can work with the school to find an alternative reading source.

This law specifically states that a policy must be developed allowing an exception to "specific course material." Standards (state or locally-developed) are neither courses nor materials. Rather, standards set forth the minimum skills

and knowledge that we want students to master. In addition, the statewide assessment is not based on a course, but rather an assessment of the knowledge and skills that students have gained throughout the year. Therefore, RSA 186:11 IX-c does not authorize districts to allow students to opt out of standards and or the statewide assessment.

Smarter Balanced is not a new federal intrusion into education.

For decades Congress has required assessments of student learning for accountability under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, known as the “No Child Left Behind Act” enacted during the Bush Administration, expanded those federal testing requirements to include state testing of every student in language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. Because of this requirement, the US Department of Education (ED) also provides funding to states to develop and implement these statewide assessments. In 2010, the US ED funded an assessment project directed and developed by a consortium of states, including New Hampshire, to develop new, next-generation assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language art/literacy and mathematics. While federal funding currently supports the research and development work of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, all policy decisions about the structure and content of the assessments are made by the member states based on input from stakeholders across the country. At the conclusion of the federal grant in September 2014, Smarter Balanced will become an operational assessment system supported by its member states.

Since these assessments are new, there is a lot of information available to the public about its development, including sample assessment questions.

Smarter Balanced and the NH DOE are committed to transparency. All of the key documents describing the assessment (content specifications, 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). Practice Tests have been available to the general public on the Smarter Balanced website (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>) for each tested grade (3 through 8 and 11) and both subject areas (English language arts/literacy and mathematics) since May 2013.

The Smarter Balanced Assessment has gone through a rigorous testing process.

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium states have thoughtfully and incrementally tested the content of the assessment and the technology that will support the assessment. The following has already been completed:

- Cognitive Labs: In late 2012/early 2013, individual students provided feedback to test developers about their experience with the innovative test questions, accommodations for students with special needs, and the testing software.
- Small-scale Trials: Promising types of questions and software features were further tried out with hundreds of students in late 2012/early 2013.
- Pilot Test: In spring 2013, more than 600,000 students at about 5,000 schools across the Consortium responded to a preliminary pool of test questions and performance tasks.

In spring 2014, the Consortium conducted a Field Test to present the entire pool of Smarter Balanced items to more than four million students across 21 states (11,000 students in New Hampshire). This practice run helped to ensure that the assessments are accurate and fair for all students. It also gave teachers and schools a chance to practice test administration procedures, and students the opportunity to experience the new assessments. NH schools participated in these efforts to test the content of the assessment and technology.

No additional state or federal dollars are necessary to implement the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

The state of New Hampshire has been required (by state and federal law) to implement a statewide assessment for many years. With this requirement, the NH DOE has received state and federal funds to assist in the development and implementation of the assessment each year. The cost of the Smarter Balanced Assessment will be very similar to the NECAP assessment and will not require additional state or federal dollars than the state already receives to implement a required statewide assessment.

The Smarter Balanced is a new assessment that is being validated for full implementation in the Spring of 2015.

Under construction ... For now, please see: http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Smarter-Balanced-Research-Agenda_Recommendations-2012-12-31.pdf

Individually identifiable student assessment data is protected under state and federal law.

New Hampshire takes the protection of student data very seriously. It has had two laws on the books for a few years specifically intended to protect student privacy: RSA Section 193-C:11 and 193-E:5. Additionally, HB 1587 (found here: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2014/HB1587.pdf>) more clearly articulated what can and cannot be collected and reported regarding student information. New Hampshire is known to have one of the strictest laws in the nation protecting the privacy of students and families. An FAQ on NH's Privacy and Security of Student Assessment Data can be accessed on the NHDOE's website (http://www.education.nh.gov/spotlight/ccss/documents/faq_privacy.pdf).

Smarter Balanced technology requirements have been designed to work with the computing resources in schools today.

The Smarter Balanced Assessments can be offered on very old operating systems and require only the minimum processors and memory required to run the operating system itself (for example, the summative assessment can be delivered using computers with 233 MHz processors and 128 MB RAM that run Windows XP). Likewise, the file size for individual assessment items will be very small to minimize the network bandwidth necessary to deliver the assessment online. **A 600 student middle school could test its students using only one 30-computer lab.** To assist districts in the transition to an online assessment, however, New Hampshire will offer a paper-and-pencil option for the first three years of operational testing.

These assessments will not result in standardization of teaching and learning.

A founding principle of Smarter Balanced is that teachers and students need high quality data, tools and resources to support improvements in student learning. Smarter Balanced isn't just an end-of-year accountability test. It is an assessment system that provides flexible, interim assessments to be offered at teachers' and schools' discretion throughout the school year and a digital library of formative assessment tools, practices and professional development resources, built by teachers for teachers, to improve the quality of information collected through the daily classroom activities of assignments, quizzes and observation of student work.

Additionally, New Hampshire implements its statewide assessment in a "low-stakes environment." Simply put, the NH DOE strongly encourages local districts to never use the Smarter Balanced Assessment as a sole or even primary indicator of an effective educator. Multiple measures of student learning should always be considered in an educator's evaluation and support system.

Questions	Answers
<p>GENERAL INFORMATION</p> <p>What is the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium?</p>	<p>Smarter Balanced is a state-led consortium working collaboratively to develop the next-generation of assessment aligned to common academic standards (see New Hampshire College- and Career-Ready Standards Frequently Asked Questions), in mathematics and English language arts/literacy. New Hampshire is a Governing State (meaning the state has voting rights in the development of the assessment) in the Consortium.</p>
<p>When will the new assessment be in place?</p>	<p>The Smarter Balanced Assessment System will be fully implemented in the spring of 2015. States will administer the summative assessment during the last 12 weeks of the school year.</p>
<p>Are teachers involved in building the assessment system?</p>	<p>Yes. Engaging teachers in the design of an assessment system provides improvements in teaching and learning.</p> <p>Smarter Balanced states have worked closely with administrators, teachers, and students for more than two years to ensure a smooth roll-out of the new assessments, and to make sure schools and teachers have the right supports in place. For the past two years, Smarter Balanced has worked directly with teachers and students across the country—through labs, discussions, the development of more than 20,000 test questions, and a preliminary Pilot Test last year—to ensure that the assessments accurately measure the full breadth and depth of the Common Core.</p>
<p>How will the Smarter Balanced assessment differ from the NECAP assessment?</p>	<p>The Smarter Balanced Assessment System will replace existing statewide assessments in mathematics, reading and writing (the NECAP) and offer significant improvements over assessments of the past, including: writing at every grade; expanded accessibility features to meet the needs of all students; and performance tasks that ask students to demonstrate an array of research, writing, and real-world problem solving skills. The new assessment will go beyond the multiple-choice assessments of the past by engaging students in a variety of test items that more closely reflect the teaching and learning that takes place in our classrooms. These test items will require students to think more critically.</p> <p>The use of computer adaptive technology is more precise and efficient than form (paper/pencil) testing, providing results for teachers and students in a matter of weeks. It gives quick results that teachers and administrators can use to differentiate instruction better meeting the needs of their students in “real time.” In addition to measuring student achievement at the end of the school year, the Smarter Balanced Assessment System will provide information during the year to give teachers and parents a better picture of where students are succeeding and where they need help. The assessment system features flexible interim assessments that schools and districts can implement to gauge student progress during the year and inform instruction, as well as a Digital Library of teacher-selected resources on classroom-based formative assessments (SBAC Educator Communications Toolkit, Summer 2014).</p>

<p>What happens after Smarter Balanced assessments in 2014?</p>	<p>Governing states accepted recommendations from the Sustainability Task Force to include a scope of services/plans to engage the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CREST) at UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. This will provide research support and a full array of administrative services after the conclusion of the federal grant in 2014. Ongoing development with continuous improvement will be integrated in overall sustainable efforts by the governed member states.</p>
<p>What are the Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs)?</p>	<p>Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) are text statements that articulate the knowledge, skills and abilities in all categories of performance on the assessment. They describe how students collectively progress toward mastery of the Common Core State Standards. This provides performance data to educators, parents and policymakers.</p> <p>An <u>online ALD panel</u> (scheduled for October 6-17, 2014) will allow thousands of K-12 educators, higher education faculty, parents, and other interested parties to participate virtually in recommending a score for grade-level proficiency. This is an opportunity for educators and other interested members of the community to provide input and ensure that the results from these Common Core-aligned assessments are based on challenging, yet fair expectations for students.</p>
<p>Is the Smarter Balanced Consortium of states addressing concerns from educators and the public?</p>	<p>Yes. Smarter Balanced is committed to addressing the concerns of educators and the public at large by ensuring a successful transition to the new assessment. A technology readiness tool has helped NH plan for the transition to online assessment. A paper-and-pencil version of the assessment will be available during a three-year transition period; however, NH is encouraging all districts to use the online version due to its adaptability features. In addition, the Consortium will also provide professional development and training for teams of educators from each state.</p>
<p>What will the transition to Smarter Balance mean for students who are participating in the New Hampshire Alternate Assessment?</p>	<p>In September 2013, the Smarter Balanced governing states unanimously approved <u>Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines</u> for the assessment system, which will shape the delivery of online testing for all students, including those with visual, auditory, linguistic or physical needs. The guidelines were developed in collaboration with member states and nationally recognized experts on English language learners and students with disabilities. The research-based policy outlines three categories of resources to ensure that the assessments meet the needs of all students. The categories further distinguish between embedded tools included in the testing platform and non-embedded tools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A set of universal accessibility tools—such as a digital notepad and scratch paper—will be available to all students. • Designated supports—like a translated pop-up glossary—will be made available to students for whom a need has been identified by school personnel familiar with each student's needs and testing resources. • Accommodations will be available to students with a documented need noted in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan. These tools include Braille and closed captioning, among others. <p>However, students who qualify to take the state's alternate assessment due to their cognitive disabilities will still have the ability to do so. More information about the state's alternate assessment can be found at: http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/.</p>
<p>Does the assessment system require a shared or common curriculum?</p>	<p>No. New Hampshire believes that these decisions are best left to the educators at the local level.</p>

<p>How do I get continued information updates on Smarter Balanced Assessment?</p>	<p>The following link will direct you to the Smarter Balanced website for current and updated information: http://www.smarterbalanced.org</p>
<p>PURPOSE</p>	
<p>What is the overall value of the assessment test?</p>	<p>Better and more reliable information to be used by educators in letting them know who are in need of additional support and those that are excelling. It is more efficient with the use of computerized testing taking less time from time of receiving materials for testing to the finish of packing and returning the test and the results are returned back to the school, student and educator faster to evaluate achievement and goal setting.</p>
<p>What will the assessment accomplish?</p>	<p>The assessment has two purposes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It will provide educators, parents and students with additional information they need to continuously improve teaching and learning that will help ensure students graduate high school college- and career-ready. 2. It will provide a snapshot of academic progress to the public that will indicate how well students are mastering the knowledge and skills being taught in public schools around the state. It is important to note that schools in New Hampshire are strongly encouraged to use multiple measures of student learning to understand the effectiveness of educators.
<p>How will the assessment contribute to student success?</p>	<p>The philosophy of the Smarter Balanced Assessment is to provide accurate information about what students know and are able to do, thus enabling teachers to target their teaching to fill gaps and move students forward. The system – which includes both summative assessments for accountability purposes and optional interim assessments for instructional use – will use <u>computer adaptive testing technologies</u> to the greatest extent possible providing meaningful feedback and actionable data that teachers and other educators can use to help students succeed.</p>
<p>PUBLIC REVIEW</p>	
<p>Are there tests available for public viewing and practice by schools and students?</p>	<p>Yes. Testing resources have been developed by Smarter Balanced to support schools and students in the next generation of assessment. Smarter Balanced offers both practice tests and training tests. These are available to the public and schools. While these resources were developed for schools and students involved in the Spring 2014 field test they provide a unique opportunity to learn about the assessment and prepare students. For more information about the practice and training tests visit http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Practice-and-Training-Test-Information.pdf.</p>
<p>What about the transparency of the assessment testing?</p>	<p>The goal is for the assessment to be completely transparent. All documents describing content specification, item specification, writing training materials, test blueprints, accommodations, frameworks, achievement descriptors and technology are available to the public on the Smarter Balanced website (http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/).</p>
<p>Are there taped webinars/webex that can be viewed?</p>	<p>Yes. Please visit: www.smarterbalanced.org/resources-events/webinars to find YouTube or SchoolTube webinars.</p>

<p>Is the Practice Test (sample questions) available to the public for viewing?</p>	<p>Yes. The practice test is available at: www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/. The Pilot Test is available online for educators/students/parents and the general public to access. This can be accessed on the Smarter Balanced website at: http://www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test/. To access the Sample Items and Tasks you will have to use the following internet browsers on your desktop and laptop computers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firefox 3.6 or newer • Internet Explorer 8 or newer • Chrome 18 or newer • Safari 4.1 or newer <p>To access the Sample Items on Android and iPad tablets with 9.5 inch screens (10 inch class) or larger you will have to use the following internet browsers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chrome 18 or newer (Android) • Safari 4.1 or newer (iPad) <p>Also, Smarter Balanced has tested both the content of the assessment and the technology. Tests completed were the Cognitive Lab, Small Scale Trials and the Pilot Test of 5,000 schools in the Consortium. If you have any questions on access to the above internet browsers please contact Stanley Freeda at the NH Department of Education: Stanley.Freeda@doe.nh.gov</p>
<p>ADMINISTRATION</p>	
<p>How long will the assessment take for a student to complete?</p>	<p>The Smarter Balanced Assessments are not timed, but it is estimated that the English language arts/literacy assessment will take 4 (for elementary students) to 4 ½ hours (for high school students) and the math assessment will take 3 hours (for elementary students) to 4 hours (for high school students). In addition, students will have a brief classroom activity to introduce the topic of the performance task. Testing will occur in multiple sessions, so students will typically spend 1 to 2 hours per day on the assessments over a few days</p>
<p>What are the technology requirements to administer the assessment?</p>	<p>The Smarter Balanced assessments have been designed to work with the computing resources in schools today. The comprehensive technology requirements report at minimum detail bandwidth, hardware and operating system specifications for devices to administer the assessment. See more detail on the SBAC website http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/</p>

<p>What does it cost for NH to participate in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium?</p>	<p>The cost of developing the Smarter Balanced assessment system is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Assessment Program. The U.S. Department of Education awarded \$330 million to two groups of states – the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) – to develop a valid next-generation assessment.</p> <p>SBAC, of which New Hampshire is a governing state member, is governed and directed by its member states. After development is complete, most states can expect to spend less or the same on Smarter Balanced assessments than they do on current assessments. The projected per pupil cost for the summative assessment is \$22.50, which is what we currently spend on NECAP – NH's current statewide assessment. There is no assessment charge to school districts to participate in the Smarter Balanced Assessment.</p>
<p>Did NH participate in the Pilot Test assessment system?</p>	<p>Yes. The Pilot Test of the assessment system started in late winter of 2013. It included items and performance tasks that are under development giving the assessment team inside information on how these items and tasks perform in a real-world setting. This assessment was administered to grades 3-8, 11 at volunteer and select schools within the state.</p>
<p>Did NH participate in the Field Test of the assessment system?</p>	<p>A Field Test of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System took place from March 25 through June 13, 2014, culminating a three-year, multi-stage research and development process to ensure the assessment works properly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than four million students participated in the Field Test across 21 states. • In NH 11,000 students participated in the field test. • This practice run helped to ensure that the assessments are accurate and fair for all students. It also offered teachers and schools a chance to practice test administration procedures, and students the opportunity to experience the new assessments.
<p>How does computer adaptive testing (CAT) work?</p>	<p>The assessment system capitalizes on the precision and efficiency of Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) for both the mandatory summative assessment and the optional interim assessment. This approach represents a significant improvement over traditional paper-and-pencil assessment used in many states today. Computer adaptive testing adjusts to a student's ability by basing the difficulty of future questions on previous answers, providing more accurate measurement of student achievement, particularly for high and low-performing students.</p>
<p>What if my school does not have the infrastructure to support computer adaptive testing?</p>	<p>The commitment is to help schools transition successfully to next-generation assessment: Technology Readiness Tools (TRT) will help identify infrastructure gaps and plan for future needs in the districts and schools.</p> <p>The TRT will help schools in capturing/reporting key readiness indicators, such as type of computers/local network/bandwidth infrastructure and local staff resources. This will help in the overall evaluation of technology readiness for the coming transition of the assessment.</p> <p>Contact for Technology Assistance: Stanley Freeda at the NH Department of Education: Stanley.Freeda@doe.nh.gov</p>
<p>RESULTS</p> <p>Will Smarter Balanced be a valid assessment?</p>	<p>Smarter Balanced states have and will continue to use test development best practices and research for determining the validity and reliability of the assessment. The test development process of Smarter Balanced seeks to make explicit the claims that test users can make when interpreting student scores. This was and continues to be accomplished by constructing a detailed and rigorous framework of planning and assessing the construction, delivery, accessibility and outcomes of the test throughout the process.</p>

<p>How is the assessment going to be used to help improve teaching and learning?</p>	<p>The assessment will be administered online and will go beyond multiple choice questions to include performance tasks that allow students to demonstrate research, writing, and analytical skills. Accommodations for students with disabilities and English language learners will be part of the system that show progress of student(s) and can be accurately measured. A reporting system will provide easy-to-understand data on growth and achievement. The reports will present students, parents, teachers, principals and others with information that can be used to help students make greater progress.</p>
<p>Will the data collected on students be intrusive/inappropriate?</p>	<p>No. New Hampshire makes its own policies on collection, storage and the use of student data according to NH privacy laws. Smarter Balanced must adhere to all state and federal laws pertaining to the collection and storage of such data like that of the current NECAP and NAEP testing. The following websites are useful in understanding federal and state law on privacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy and Security of NH Assessment Data FAQ http://www.education.nh.gov/spotlight/ccss/documents/faq_privacy.pdf • Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html • No Child Left Behind (NCLB): http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.html • Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ129 • Education Reform Sciences Act of 2002: http://www.ed.gov/e-12-reform • Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html • New Hampshire Department of Education Law: http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/XV/193-C/193-C-11.htm; http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2014/HB1587.pdf
<p>Are there any concerns about test security? (cheating or tampering)</p>	<p>The summative assessment design allows states to administer different tests during the twelve week testing period each academic year. Computer adaptive assessments for students are based and customized on their performance during test taking. Each question is uniquely different. The results are captured electronically so the possibility for it to be tampered with cannot happen once the administration is complete.</p>
<p>Do the assessments result in standardization of teaching and learning?</p>	<p>No, absolutely not. Smarter Balanced makes sure that teachers and students have high quality data, tools and resources to support improvement. The assessment is not only an end-of-year test. The assessment system will provide flexibility of non-secured test items that teachers can use throughout the year at their discretion. These are instructional improvement tools, but they do not tell teachers how to teach.</p>
<p>Does a longitudinal academic growth model relate to assessment work?</p>	<p>Reporting student growth is a priority to Smarter Balanced states. The growth measure will describe relative growth and that of growth expected giving prior achievements, and comparing growth to their peers to which students are on track to college and career readiness.</p>
<p>Will the assessment include scaled scores and performance scores like that of NECAP?</p>	<p>Yes. At this time, scaled scores to assess year to year data and performance scores, "Proficient with Distinction/Proficient/Partially Proficient/Substantially Below Proficient," will continue as they currently do with NECAP.</p>



Reliability and Validity of the Smarter Balanced Assessment

October 25, 2014

Executive Summary:

Smarter Balanced states have and will continue to use test development best practices and research for determining the validity and reliability of the assessment. The test development process of Smarter Balanced seeks to make explicit the claims that test users can make when interpreting student scores. This was and continues to be accomplished by constructing a detailed and rigorous framework of planning and assessing the construction, delivery, accessibility and outcomes of the test throughout the process.

Full Discussion:

Smarter Balanced states have taken a comprehensive approach to meeting the requirements for establishing a valid measurement. Consistent with the literature on assessment validation, Smarter Balanced constructed a test development process to make explicit the inferences (or “claims”) that test users can make when interpreting student scores from the Smarter Balanced assessments. This involved the development of a validity framework to describe the process needed to evaluate these claims. The key steps in this development process are described in the Test Development section below.

The Smarter Balanced validity process is organized into two phases:

Phase 1. Test Development

Phase 2. Evaluation

Test Development Phase:

A valid process of test development requires adherence to best practices of test design and makes possible the creation of tests that measure what is intended or desired for a specified population. The various activities and analyses in the *Test Development Phase* are known as establishing “Process Validity.” Evidence that Smarter Balanced has met “Process Validity” requirements has been documented and its activities include (listed in procedural order):

- Establishment of a validity framework to guide test development and ongoing research;
- Development of a comprehensive set of content specifications that describes the state’s English language arts and mathematics content standards in terms of evidence statements about what students are expected to know and do;
- Development of test blueprints that specify number and types of questions to be presented to students;

- Development of task models for items and stimuli that guide the writing and review of individual test items and passages;
- Conducting content and bias/sensitivity reviews to ensure that items and passages are aligned to academic content standards, are consistent with evidence statements of the content specifications, and are not biased in favor of or against students from different cultural and demographic backgrounds;
- Design and development of a test delivery platform which is the software used to deliver the online assessments to students;
- Conducting cognitive labs on item types and accommodations to uncover issues and opportunities with modes of presentation, tools and other item features;
- Establishment of a comprehensive accessibility framework and guidelines to ensure that the assessments are accessible to the widest possible array of students;
- Conducting small-scale trials to investigate the use and feasibility of different item types;
- Design and development of software for computer adaptive test delivery, which is used to select items to be presented to students on the basis of both meeting the test blueprint and selecting items that maximize the accuracy of the student's score;
- Implementation of large-scale pilot tests in order to collect data on the initial performance of items and the testing platform software;
- Implementation of large-scale field tests to collect data on all items to evaluate their technical adequacy and their placement on a continuous growth scale from grades 3 through 11;
- Analysis of the alignment among all components of the assessment design, and ultimately, between the Common Core State Standards and the tests students actually take; and
- Establishment of internal validity or the degree to which the test functions as required, has sufficient reliability, and sufficient ability to measure the intended content and not unintended content. Initially, Internal validity was investigated using Pilot Test results to determine whether or not a given content area test (ELA or Math) measured the intended construct and not unintended constructs.

Test reliability will initially be modeled through simulations using the item pool after item review, which is due to be completed December 31, 2014. Operational test reliability will be reported in the technical manual following the first operational administration in spring 2015.

Evaluation Phase:

Once the Smarter Balanced assessments are administered operationally in spring 2015, it will be possible to determine "external validity," which is the degree to which test results correspond to external indicators (and are consistent with expectations). For example, students who perform well on the summative test are expected to perform well in the classroom. This will be accomplished through external research studies after the operational test is given. Smarter Balanced has constructed the main validity activities established through the Smarter Balanced Validity Framework and the associated sources of evidence, past, present, and future. Because this type of evidence continues to be gathered through the operational administration of the assessments, this mostly reflects future plans for external validity research.