

Smarter Balanced Releases Online Practice Tests

Examples provide early look at next-generation assessments aligned to the Common Core

OLYMPIA, Wash. — May 29, 2013 — Teachers, parents, and students across the country can now access online practice tests aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) today released sets of example test questions for grades 3–8 and 11 in both English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The Practice Tests will help schools prepare for the implementation of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System in the 2014-15 school year.

“The release of online Practice Tests reflects the tremendous progress of the state-led effort to develop next-generation assessments,” said Joe Willhoft, Ph.D., executive director of Smarter Balanced. “Available nearly two years before the first administration of the summative assessment, these examples offer schools and districts another resource for professional development and outreach.”

The Practice Tests provide a preview of the types of questions that will be featured in the summative assessment beginning in 2014-15, including selected-response items, constructed-response items, technology-enhanced items, and performance tasks—extended activities that challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to respond to real-world problems. The Practice Tests are freely available on the Smarter Balanced website: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>.

“The Practice Tests allow teachers and students to experience the higher level of rigor associated with Common Core tests and gain familiarity with the online test delivery system,” said Deborah Sigman, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction for the California Department of Education and Smarter Balanced Executive Committee Co-Chair. “Member states are making these example test questions available as part of our commitment to a balanced assessment system that provides high-quality information to improve teaching and learning.”

The Practice Tests do not include all the features of the operational assessments. For example, students and teachers will not receive reports or scores from the Practice Tests. Although Smarter Balanced assessments will be computer adaptive, the Practice Tests follow a fixed-form model. By fall 2013, Smarter Balanced will make enhancements to the Practice Tests, including the addition of performance tasks in mathematics, new accommodations for students with disabilities, and scoring rubrics.

The release of the Practice Tests follows the Smarter Balanced Pilot Test, the first large-scale tryout of items and performance tasks. The Pilot Test allowed the Consortium to gather information about the performance of assessment items and the test delivery system under real-world conditions. More than 5,000 schools in 21 Smarter Balanced Governing States were recruited to participate in the Pilot Test from February 20 – May 24, 2013. Development of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System will continue after the release of the Practice Tests and through summer 2014 in collaboration with member states and educators.

Smarter Balanced is committed to a transparent process for developing next-generation assessments. In October 2012, Smarter Balanced released a set of sample assessment items and performance tasks. The Consortium has also published: content specifications that translate the standards into assessment claims and targets; item and task specifications that specify how individual questions are to be written; and the preliminary test blueprints that describe the content of the test and how it will be assessed.

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