



North Coast Teacher Induction Program



**The Smarter Balanced Assessment
Resource Guide**



The Smarter Balanced Assessments

The **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium** is a state-led consortium working collaboratively to develop next-generation assessments aligned to the **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** that accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness. The following information was excerpted from their website. For more detailed information, visit www.smarterbalanced.org.

What is a performance task?

Performance tasks challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to respond to real-world problems. They can best be described as 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, research skills, and complex analysis, which cannot be adequately assessed with selected- or constructed-response items.

Performance tasks in reading, writing, and mathematics will be part of the Smarter Balanced summative, year-end assessment. Performance tasks can also be administered as part of the optional interim assessments throughout the year. The performance tasks will be delivered by computer (but will not be computer adaptive) and will take one to two class periods to complete.

Are sample Smarter Balanced assessment questions available?

In April 2013, Smarter Balanced released online Practice Tests that provide an early look at sets of assessment questions aligned to the Common Core for grades 3 - 8 and 11 in both English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The Practice Tests allow teachers, students, parents, and other interested parties to experience the features of online testing and gain insight into how Smarter Balanced will assess students' mastery of the Common Core.

In October 2012, Smarter Balanced released sample items and performance tasks that illustrate the variety of innovative item types students will encounter on the Smarter Balanced assessments.

How long will the assessments take to administer?

Smarter Balanced assessments are designed as untimed tests; some students may need and should be afforded more time.

Do the Smarter Balanced assessments support English language learners, students with disabilities, and other students with special needs?

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—allowing virtually all students to demonstrate what they know and can do.





Will Smarter Balanced assessments replace the SAT and ACT?

No. The 11th grade summative assessment is not designed to be a college admissions test. Rather, it is designed to help students and institutions of higher education better gauge which students leave high school prepared for entry-level, transferable, credit-bearing work in English and mathematics. That is a different question than whether or not students should be admitted. Colleges and universities often admit students who are not immediately ready for credit-bearing coursework. Additionally, colleges and universities vary in how much they rely upon the SAT and ACT—and in the scores on those tests they expect students to meet. Therefore, we believe institutions of higher education will continue to rely on scores from the SAT and ACT in the admissions process. Smarter Balanced is also coordinating with member states to determine how Smarter Balanced results can most effectively be reported to the colleges and universities students choose.

If states administer a paper-and-pencil version of the assessment, will scores be comparable with the computer adaptive test?

Smarter Balanced will make a paper-and-pencil version of the summative assessment available during a three-year transition period as schools and districts upgrade their technology. Smarter Balanced will conduct research to ensure that results are comparable across the two modes of assessment.

Smarter Balanced Practice Tests: Leaping In!

Written by Rick Phelan, Director of Technology for Learning (2013)

California's high-stakes testing will change in the 2014-15 school year. The new computer-based tests are being created to evaluate learning aligned with the Common Core State Standards for English and mathematics. The Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) will manage the testing system for California and at least 20 other states.



This spring [2013], a number of Sonoma County schools participated in the SBAC scientific pilot. I took time to visit with some of the educators who took part in the pilot. Here are some of the reflections teachers and administrators shared with me.

Why did your school choose to participate in the 2013 Spring pilot of the Smarter Balance Assessment?

- We felt we had to leap in and try it. We wanted to see how our students would do in a computer-based testing situation.
- We wanted to understand the logistics of SBAC administration in comparison to the STAR assessment; what was the same and what was different?
- Our school initially wanted to get SBAC results and compare them to STAR results. We learned that this wasn't possible in the 2013 pilot. We decided to follow through with the pilot for three reasons. We wanted to (1) learn about SBAC administration, (2) see how our current technology worked, and (3) observe our students working with SBAC tasks.



What were your observations about the 2013 SBAC pilot?

- It was very time consuming. We had to learn about the Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) system, setup computers with 'secure' SBAC web browsers, and organize testing schedules.
- The test was supposed to take two hours, but we found that our students could not sit for two hours straight. We revised our two-hour schedules to allow for shorter 30-minute sessions with breaks from the computer.
- Students had to write about their thinking and make justifications for their answers; it wasn't only about finding the 'right' answer.
- The test items were interesting for the students.
- The students didn't know how to carry out computer-based tasks in some situations. Four challenging situations: (1) tasks that involved moving between two or more screens, (2) operating spreadsheets and calculators, (3) manipulating virtual objects such as geometric constructions, and (4) editing electronic text.

What advice can you offer schools preparing for the Smarter Balance Assessments?

- Administrators, teachers, and students need to see and experience the SBAC firsthand before 2014-15.
- Plan time to prepare and do trials with your students. You won't do well if you wait until the last minute.
- Use the SBAC Help Line. They are knowledgeable and helpful.
- Have a master list with State Student Identifier numbers and student names.
- Take time to produce 3x5 cards with student names and their State Student Identifier numbers. They need this information to login to the SBAC system.
- Do the practice assessment.
- During the testing period, there needs to be a dedicated person who will manage the SBAC; it is not reasonable to think the classroom teacher can do it alone.

Preparation & Practice Tests

On May 29 [2013], SBAC released practice tests to provide an early look at sets of assessment questions aligned to the Common Core for grades 3–8 and 11 in both English language arts/literacy and mathematics.

SCOE encourages individuals and groups to spend time examining the new SBAC assessments. Districts should look for opportunities to share with trustees, leadership teams, faculty groups, parents, school site councils, and community stakeholder groups. Students should also be given opportunities to explore the new SBAC assessment tasks.

These awareness activities will provide a springboard for shared conversations on how districts are responding to 21st century career and technical needs, technology, and the Common Core Standards. Some districts are creating road maps for integrating the Common Core and SBAC assessments into five-year planning documents.

More information about the Smarter Balanced Assessment Tests can be found at www.scoe.org or www.smarterbalanced.org.