



# KEY POINTS >

## FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

### OVERVIEW

- The quality of the educational system in the state of Delaware directly affects the strength of the state's economy. Delaware businesses need a highly trained and knowledgeable workforce to continue competitively delivering valued goods and services. Moreover, businesses need a strong school system to be able to attract and retain employees with families. The state of Delaware is committed to helping all students get *Ready for the Real World*.
- For the past several years, Delaware, along with many other states, has been implementing more rigorous academic standards for our students and schools. The goal is to help them graduate from high school more prepared for college and careers, with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills employers are seeking.
- These new, higher expectations, known as the Common Core State Standards, necessitated the development of a new, aligned testing system to determine how well students are mastering the new standards and where they need help.
- As of spring 2015, the Smarter Assessment system replaces the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) with Smarter English Language Arts/Literacy and Smarter Mathematics Assessments for grades 3 to 8 and 11.

### SMARTER ASSESSMENT / WHY THE TEST IS BETTER

- The new Smarter Assessment is more than year-end testing. It is a complete system that delivers the high-quality data, tools and resources schools need to support improvements in student learning throughout the year. Features include a *Digital Library* of online resources for teachers and optional *Interim Assessments* they can use to track student progress.
- Smarter Assessment offers significant improvements over previous testing. It replaces the traditional multiple choice format with open-ended questions that require students to write short answers, explain their thinking and solve problems in very different ways.
- For English Language Arts (ELA), students are asked to read more complex fiction and non-fiction texts across all subjects, not just English. They will use evidence from the texts to answer questions, make inferences and write essays.
- In mathematics, students will be performing more multi-step problems with application to real-world situations, and will have to explain how they achieved their answers.
- Because students are being assessed by more challenging academic standards than before, fewer will likely meet the new standards in the beginning. The initial year of testing will establish a new baseline, and results should improve as students receive more years of instruction aligned with the standards.

- To allow all students, including those with disabilities and English language learners, to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, the new assessment system offers the most complete suite of accessibility tools and accommodation resources ever included in a K–12 assessment, such as Braille and closed captioning.

#### **CONCERNS ABOUT OVER-TESTING**

- Governor Jack Markell recently announced that the state would provide each school district and charter school with the resources they need to “audit” their current testing practices to identify any tests that can be eliminated.
- The state has already reduced the number of state assessments over the past 2 years, and will continue to determine if others can be eliminated.
- The time devoted to the Smarter English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics Assessments amounts to less than 1 percent of the time students are in school.

#### **COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

- Voluntarily adopted by more than 40 states, the Common Core State Standards set a higher bar for achievement, one that is consistent from state to state and on-par with international benchmarks.
- Now all teachers will teach to the same standards; all students will have the benefit of being held to the same high expectations regardless of race, ethnicity or zip code; and a test score on the Smarter Assessment in Delaware will mean the same as it will in other states using the same tests.
- Delaware students will be more prepared than ever to compete in the marketplace with the knowledge and skills employers are seeking.