



OVERVIEW

- All Delaware children deserve the very best education we can give. Their ability to succeed in a competitive world depends on it.
- That's why Delaware has been a leader in raising our academic standards. We are helping all of our students graduate from high school more prepared for college and careers, equipped with the 21st century skills employers are seeking.
- Delaware teachers have been implementing these standards — the Common Core State Standards — for the last few years. Smarter Assessment is designed to measure students' progress in mastering those standards.
- Students in grades 3 through 8 and 11 are taking the new assessments this spring and together we will learn how well they are mastering Delaware's higher standards and where they need additional help.
- With parents and teachers working together, and with significantly improved assessments, we are helping your child get *Ready for the Real World*.

SMARTER ASSESSMENT

- Smarter Assessment is the new online assessment system that replaces our existing testing, the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS), with Smarter English Language Arts/Literacy and Smarter Mathematics Assessments for grades 3 to 8 and grade 11.
- Educators from Delaware and around the country helped create and improve the assessments by writing questions and reviewing the assessments for content, bias/sensitivity, and accessibility.

WHY THE TEST IS BETTER

- Smarter Assessment offers significant improvements over our previous testing.
- It replaces the traditional multiple choice format with more thoughtful questions that challenge students to come up with their own answers and explain their thinking. The assessments include real-life performance tasks requiring your child to apply knowledge and skills across multiple content standards to increase critical thinking abilities.
- For English Language Arts (ELA), students are asked to read more complex literary and informational texts across all subjects, not just English, and then use evidence from the texts to answer questions, make inferences and, depending on the grade, present argumentative 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.
- If your child is an English language learner or has any special needs, such as visual, auditory or physical access requirements, you will appreciate the Smarter Assessment suite of accessibility

tools and accommodation resources. Through resources such as Braille, closed captioning, and embedded glossaries in 10 languages and 4 dialects, your child will be able to capably demonstrate his or her knowledge and skills.

KEY FACTS ABOUT THE NEW TEST

- Unlike our previous testing, which was given as often as three times each year, the new assessments will be given just once each spring, with 2015 testing conducted between March 10 and June 4 for grades 3 to 8 and April 13 through June 4 for grade 11.
- The new assessments will be taken online and completed over the course of a few days in 1- to 2-hour sessions. This will minimize the demands on classroom time and ensure that your child remains alert and engaged. The tests are not timed, and your child may take breaks so he or she can do his or her very best.
- Because students are being assessed on their mastery of more challenging academic standards than before, fewer will likely meet the new standards in the beginning. This is expected and no reflection of your child's ability or what he or she is learning. We are holding students to higher standards now and measuring different aspects of learning, such as whether students are developing critical thinking and problem solving skills. Our first year of testing will establish a new baseline.
- The portions of the tests that call for written responses will be hand-scored individually by people who have expertise in the subject matter and are trained to judge them objectively. That takes longer, so you will receive the results in July.
- The report you receive comprises several scores: an overall composite score for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics, results for particular topics such as reading and writing, and an "achievement level" for each subject. Students who achieve a level of 3 or 4 appear to be making appropriate progress toward college and career readiness.
- You can be confident that your child's privacy will be protected and that the assessment results will be used only to adjust and improve instruction.
- If you like, you can take a practice test that demonstrates how the new test fully assesses your child's abilities, available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test>.

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.
- In addition, the state Department of Education has eliminated several statewide tests over the past 2 years—including end-of-course exams in Algebra I, Integrated Math I, Reading and Biology—and is evaluating others as well.
- The time devoted to the Smarter English Language Arts/Literacy and Smarter Mathematics Assessments amounts to less than 1 percent of the time students are in school.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

- The new standards represent a national set of academic expectations known as the Common Core State Standards. Voluntarily adopted by more than 40 states, they challenge your children to understand more deeply, to think critically and to apply that learning to the real world.
- The new standards set a higher bar for achievement, one that is consistent from state to state and on-par with international benchmarks.