



### **What is Smarter Assessment?**

Smarter Assessment is the 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. The system was developed specifically to measure how well your child is mastering Delaware’s new higher standards and identify areas in which your child needs help preparing for future success in college and careers. It is focused on getting kids *Ready for the Real World*.

### **Why is my child taking new assessments this year?**

Delaware, as well as more than 40 other states, has adopted the more rigorous Common Core State Standards in recent years. Delaware teachers have worked together for several years to implement these standards, and these assessments are fully aligned with those standards. They will tell parents, teachers and students how well their students and schools are performing against these more rigorous standards.

### **Who created the new assessments?**

Educators from Delaware and around the country helped create and improve the assessments. They wrote questions and reviewed the assessments for content, bias/sensitivity, and accessibility.

### **How is Smarter Assessment better than previous tests?**

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 students 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. They will 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.

### **Is this a different kind of test than given in the past?**

Yes and no. The English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments each have two components: computer-adaptive assessments and performance tasks. Your child is familiar with computer-adaptive test-taking from our previous DCAS testing. However, types of responses on the computer-adaptive part of the test and the performance tasks are new for our students.

### **What are computer-adaptive assessments? What are performance tasks?**

Computer-adaptive testing essentially customizes the test for each child by adjusting the level of difficulty based on how well your child is answering the questions. This method provides a more accurate measurement of achievement, particularly for high- and low-performing students. Performance tasks are collections of questions and activities that are connected to a single theme or scenario. They are meant to measure depth of understanding, writing and research skills, and complex analysis.

### **Will the test be *too* different from what my child is used to?**

In the new assessments, your child is asked to write more, to think more deeply about what he or she is reading, and to show he or she understands concepts in different ways. But the tests will not seem unfamiliar because the questions will be similar to the work he or she is already performing in class. In addition, Delaware students have been taking on-line assessments for many years.

### **How do Smarter Assessments help improve my child's instruction?**

Smarter Assessment is more than just a year-end test. It's a complete system that gives teachers a range of tools to assess how well your child is doing and resources for improving their instruction. Teachers can use optional interim assessments throughout the year to check in on your child's progress and adjust their teaching as needed. An *Educator's Digital Library* includes more than 2,600 resources created by teachers to assist with assessing students' progress and adjusting instruction when needed. The *Digital Library* is not an assessment bank, but a wide range of resources geared to formative instruction and a collaboration tool to support teachers in helping students.

### **How can I help prepare my child for these tests?**

You can help your child be more successful by reading together, reviewing and discussing homework, communicating with your child's teachers, attending school and public meetings, learning about the new standards and how they affect your child's education and school, and by looking through your child's backpack each afternoon to stay current with his or her learning.

Parents also can visit the [Delaware System of Student Assessments website](#) and practice on some sample questions that will help students become more comfortable with the new format of the questions.

### **When do the new assessments begin?**

Unlike our previous testing, which was given as often as three times each year, the new assessments will be given just once each spring, between March and June for grades 3 to 8. Your school will let you know when your child is scheduled for testing. Beyond the year-end assessments, teachers also have the option of using interim tests throughout the year to help them better understand your child's learning needs and to fine-tune their teaching accordingly.

### **How are Smarter Assessments administered and how long does it take?**

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. We estimate that for elementary school students, the English Language Arts (ELA) assessment will take 3.5 hours and the mathematics assessment will take 2.5 hours. That is far less than the time spent on state tests in previous years.

### **Will these assessments accommodate my child's special needs?**

Absolutely. 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. Teachers who work with English language learners and students with disabilities were included in the development of Smarter Assessments to make sure that every child has the chance to show what he or she knows. For a small number of students who aren't able to meaningfully take the Smarter Assessment because they have significant intellectual disabilities, there is an Alternate Assessment available. For more information, ask your child's Individualized Education Plan team to discuss this option.

### **When will we get the results from the test? And what kind of report will we receive?**

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.

### **What if I want to refuse to have my child tested?**

You are encouraged to have your child participate because the assessments provide reliable, meaningful, objective measures of whether your student is mastering the new standards. The assessments also will serve to show the strengths and weaknesses of instruction in a school. The strengths will be celebrated, and the weaknesses will show where teachers and principals should provide additional resources. In addition, if fewer than 95% of students of any group, such as low-income students, at the school, district or state level do not take the tests, the federal government may withhold federal aid that schools use to provide a wide range of services. With so many good reasons for participation, we strongly urge parents to support the Smarter Assessment initiative.

### **Isn't there too much time spent on testing in Delaware?**

In 2016, Governor Jack Markell required the state 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 a number of statewide tests over the past 3 years—including end-of-course exams in Algebra I, Integrated Math 1, Reading and Biology 1—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.

### **How will my child's privacy be protected?**

The State of Delaware retains control of all student information, including assessment results. You can be confident that the assessment results will be used only to adjust and improve instruction so that your child can master the knowledge and skills necessary for college and career readiness.

### **Can I see the new test?**

Yes, 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>.