



OVERVIEW

- Your children deserve the very best education we can give. Their ability to succeed in a competitive world depends on it.
- That's why Delaware was involved in creating the Common Core State Standards, which are designed to prepare your children to graduate from high school more prepared for college and careers and equipped with the 21st century skills employers are seeking.
- The Common Core State Standards are benchmarked to the best international and state standards. They will ensure that your children can compete with peers across the country and around the world.
- Delaware teachers have been implementing the new standards for the last few years. The Smarter Assessment system gives you as well as your own children's teachers a sense of their progress toward that important goal.
- With schools, teachers and parents working together, and with significantly improved assessments, we're helping our students get *Ready for the Real World*.

SMARTER ASSESSMENT FOR TEACHERS

- The Smarter Assessment system helps you see how well your students are mastering the new standards and moving toward college and career readiness.
- Developed by educators from around the country, including Delaware teachers, this system provides the data, tools and resources needed to support improvements in student learning throughout the year.
- The *Digital Library* is an online repository of more than 2,600 instructional and professional learning resources developed by and for teachers to assist with assessing students' progress and adjusting instruction when needed. Spanning K–12 and aligned to the Common Core State Standards, the resources will help you implement effective, aligned practices that are recommended by your peers.
- Optional *Interim Assessments* are available for teachers to check in on student progress throughout the year and adjust instruction as needed. The full *Interim Comprehensive Assessment* mirrors the year-end assessment and gives students the opportunity to experience the full test. *Interim Assessment Blocks* can be used to check on students' understanding of small sets of related standards.
- All Smarter Assessment tools are now available for your use.

WHY THE TESTS ARE BETTER

- 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.
- These tests are designed to measure the effects of a strong, rich, engaging, varied curriculum that is taught effectively. Test-preparation programs designed solely to increase test scores are not advised; the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium offers practice tests.
- 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.

CONCERNS ABOUT OVER-TESTING

- 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.
- Over the past 3 years, the state has eliminated several state tests — including end-of-course exams in Algebra I, Integrated Mathematics, Biology and Reading — and will continue to evaluate to ensure that all tests are useful and necessary.
- 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.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

- We are holding our students to higher standards now, such as whether they are developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. We have no doubt scores will rise as students receive more instruction aligned with the new standards.
- 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 parents will not receive their children’s results until July. Statewide scores will also be released in July.
- Teachers are encouraged to take a practice test, available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test>.