



## Frequently Asked Questions

**Smarter Balanced assessment is based on the Connecticut Core Standards.**

### **What are the Connecticut Core Standards?**

The Connecticut Core Standards, adopted by the State Board of Education in 2010, provide teachers, students, and families with clear expectations of what a student should know and be able to do at each grade level. The standards focus on English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, as well as literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects in grades 6-12. School districts develop local curricula based on these college and career standards. Standards, high-quality curriculum, and instruction prepare students to meet the demands of 21st-century study, work, and life. Visit [www.CTCoreStandards.org](http://www.CTCoreStandards.org) for more information.

### **What are the Smarter Balanced assessments?**

A group of states, including Connecticut, worked together to develop high-quality tests in English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics that are aligned to the new standards. Smarter Balanced has developed new assessments to measure student progress toward college and career readiness in ELA and mathematics.

### **Why does Connecticut have new English language arts/literacy and mathematics assessments?**

By federal and state law, universal student assessment is required in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3-8 and once in high school annually. When Connecticut changed standards in ELA and mathematics, a new assessment became necessary to measure the skills being taught in the classroom. These tests serve as an academic checkup, helping teachers and parents know how well students are progressing and if they are ready for the next step. These tests replace the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) in ELA and mathematics.

### **Who developed the Smarter Balanced assessments?**

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is made up of a group of states, including Connecticut, and has brought teachers, administrators, parents, and other education experts together to collaborate on the development of high-quality assessments. Connecticut has worked with other states to

thoughtfully test the content and the technology that support the assessments. This has included collecting feedback from students on the format of questions and accommodations for students with disabilities.

### **What is the Smarter Balanced summative assessment?**

The Smarter Balanced **summative assessment** is the test Connecticut uses for accountability purposes. It is designed to provide information regarding the level of student, school, or program success at the end of each grade level. The Smarter Balanced summative assessments include a computer adaptive test and a performance test for both ELA and mathematics.

### **What is a computer adaptive test?**

A computer adaptive test adjusts to a student's ability by basing the difficulty of future questions on previous answers, providing more accurate measurement of student achievement. Students are presented with short-answer responses, multiple-choice questions, and interactive test items.

### **What is a performance task?**

Performance tasks challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to explore and analyze a real-world scenario. They can best be described as collections of questions and activities that are connected to a single theme or scenario. These activities measure a student's depth of understanding, writing and research skills, or complex analysis.

## What supports are available to students?

Accommodations and supports for students with disabilities or English learners are built into the system so that the progress of students can be accurately measured.

## When are the Smarter Balanced summative assessments administered?

Smarter Balanced summative assessments are administered to students in grades 3–8 and 11 during the last 12 weeks of school.

## How long does it take a student to complete the Smarter Balanced summative assessments?

Smarter Balanced assessments are designed as untimed tests; some students may need and should be afforded more time. It is estimated that students should be able to complete the English language arts/literacy and mathematics tests in about six to seven hours.

## What type of scores will be provided?

The summative assessment provides information about what students know and can do in relation to the Connecticut Core Standards. Students receive a score based on their performance. Scores on these assessments should not be compared to previous Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) or Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) results because this test measures different knowledge and skills. The Connecticut Smarter Balanced summative assessment is only one indicator of a student's performance. The results should be used along with other information, such as classwork and other tests, when making educational decisions.

## How do the Smarter Balanced assessments help students graduate ready for college and careers?

Smarter Balanced member states have worked with thousands of educators to design and test the assessments. Smarter Balanced is more than just a year-end test. Teachers have access to tools that help them check in on student progress throughout the year, including a digital library of teaching resources

and optional interim assessments that help teachers plan and improve instruction.

## What is the Smarter Balanced interim assessment?

The Smarter Balanced **interim assessments** can be administered periodically throughout the school year to supply teachers with individual student performance data. This provides teachers with information so they may adjust their instruction to move individual learning forward.

## What is the Smarter Balanced Digital Library?

The digital library is a searchable, interactive online collection of instructional and professional learning resources developed by educators for educators. These resources are aligned with the intent of the Common Core State Standards and help educators implement the formative assessment process to improve teaching and learning. The digital library also includes resources to interpret data and reports from the Smarter Balanced summative and interim assessments.

## What is formative assessment?

Formative assessment is a **deliberate process** used by teachers and students **during instruction** that provides **actionable feedback**. This feedback is used to **adjust** ongoing teaching and learning strategies to improve students' attainment of curricular learning targets or goals.

## How is information provided by the Smarter Balanced assessment system used?

Assessment information about student performance allows:

- **teachers** to target instruction to individual student needs;
- **students** to better target their own efforts;
- **administrators** to understand what students know and can do to guide curriculum and professional development decisions; and
- **parents** to understand what their child knows and is able to do in ELA and mathematics.

*Additional information about the **Connecticut Core Standards** and the **Connecticut Smarter Balanced Assessments**, including practice tests for each grade and subject, is located on the Connecticut State Department of Education website ([www.ct.gov/sde](http://www.ct.gov/sde)).*