

Questions	Answers
GENERAL INFORMATION	
What is the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium?	Smarter Balanced is a state-led consortium working collaboratively to develop the next-generation of assessment aligned to common academic standards (see New Hampshire College- and Career-Ready Standards Frequently Asked Questions), in mathematics and English language arts/literacy. New Hampshire is a Governing State (meaning the state has voting rights in the development of the assessment) in the Consortium.
When will the new assessment be in place?	The Smarter Balanced Assessment System will be fully implemented in the spring of 2015. States will administer the summative assessment during the last 12 weeks of the school year.
Are teachers involved in building the assessment system?	Yes. Engaging teachers in the design of an assessment system provides improvements in teaching and learning. Smarter Balanced states have worked closely with administrators, teachers, and students for more than two years to ensure a smooth roll-out of the new assessments, and to make sure schools and teachers have the right supports in place. For the past two years, Smarter Balanced has worked directly with teachers and students across the country—through labs, discussions, the development of more than 20,000 test questions, and a preliminary Pilot Test last year—to ensure that the assessments accurately measure the full breadth and depth of the Common Core.
How will the Smarter Balanced assessment differ from the NECAP assessment?	The Smarter Balanced Assessment System will replace existing statewide assessments in mathematics, reading and writing (the NECAP) and offer significant improvements over assessments of the past, including: writing at every grade; expanded accessibility features to meet the needs of all students; and performance tasks that ask students to demonstrate an array of research, writing, and real-world problem solving skills. The new assessment will go beyond the multiple-choice assessments of the past by engaging students in a variety of test items that more closely reflect the teaching and learning that takes place in our classrooms. These test items will require students to think more critically. The use of computer adaptive technology is more precise and efficient than form (paper/pencil) testing, providing results for teachers and students in a matter of weeks. It gives quick results that teachers and administrators can use to differentiate instruction better meeting the needs of their students in “real time.” In addition to measuring student achievement at the end of the school year, the Smarter Balanced Assessment System will provide information during the year to give teachers and parents a better picture of where students are succeeding and where they need help. The assessment system features flexible interim assessments that schools and districts can implement to gauge student progress during the year and inform instruction, as well as a Digital Library of teacher-selected resources on classroom-based formative assessments (SBAC Educator Communications Toolkit, Summer 2014).

<p>What happens after Smarter Balanced assessments in 2014?</p>	<p>Governing states accepted recommendations from the Sustainability Task Force to include a scope of services/plans to engage the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) at UCLA’s Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. This will provide research support and a full array of administrative services after the conclusion of the federal grant in 2014. Ongoing development with continuous improvement will be integrated in overall sustainable efforts by the governed member states.</p>
<p>What are the Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs)?</p>	<p>Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) are text statements that articulate the knowledge, skills and abilities in all categories of performance on the assessment. They describe how students collectively progress toward mastery of the Common Core State Standards. This provides performance data to educators, parents and policymakers.</p> <p>An online ALD panel (scheduled for October 6-17, 2014) will allow thousands of K-12 educators, higher education faculty, parents, and other interested parties to participate virtually in recommending a score for grade-level proficiency. This is an opportunity for educators and other interested members of the community to provide input and ensure that the results from these Common Core-aligned assessments are based on challenging, yet fair expectations for students.</p>
<p>Is the Smarter Balanced Consortium of states addressing concerns from educators and the public?</p>	<p>Yes. Smarter Balanced is committed to addressing the concerns of educators and the public at large by ensuring a successful transition to the new assessment. A technology readiness tool has helped NH plan for the transition to online assessment. A paper-and-pencil version of the assessment will be available during a three-year transition period; however, NH is encouraging all districts to use the online version due to its adaptability features. In addition, the Consortium will also provide professional development and training for teams of educators from each state.</p>
<p>What will the transition to Smarter Balance mean for students who are participating in the New Hampshire Alternate Assessment?</p>	<p>In September 2013, the Smarter Balanced governing states unanimously approved <i>Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines</i> for the assessment system, which will shape the delivery of online testing for all students, including those with visual, auditory, linguistic or physical needs. The guidelines were developed in collaboration with member states and nationally recognized experts on English language learners and students with disabilities. The research-based policy outlines three categories of resources to ensure that the assessments meet the needs of all students. The categories further distinguish between embedded tools included in the testing platform and non-embedded tools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A set of universal accessibility tools—such as a digital notepad and scratch paper—will be available to all students. • Designated supports—like a translated pop-up glossary—will be made available to students for whom a need has been identified by school personnel familiar with each student’s needs and testing resources. • Accommodations will be available to students with a documented need noted in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan. These tools include Braille and closed captioning, among others. <p>However, students who qualify to take the state’s alternate assessment due to their cognitive disabilities will still have the ability to do so. More information about the state’s alternate assessment can be found at: http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/.</p>
<p>Does the assessment system require a shared or common curriculum?</p>	<p>No. New Hampshire believes that these decisions are best left to the educators at the local level.</p>

How do I get continued information updates on Smarter Balanced Assessment?	The following link will direct you to the Smarter Balanced website for current and updated information: http://www.smarterbalanced.org
PURPOSE	
What is the overall value of the assessment test?	Better and more reliable information to be used by educators in letting them know who are in need of additional support and those that are excelling. It is more efficient with the use of computerized testing taking less time from time of receiving materials for testing to the finish of packing and returning the test and the results are returned back to the school, student and educator faster to evaluate achievement and goal setting.
What will the assessment accomplish?	The assessment has two purposes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It will provide educators, parents and students with additional information they need to continuously improve teaching and learning that will help ensure students graduate high school college- and career-ready. 2. It will provide a snapshot of academic progress to the public that will indicate how well students are mastering the knowledge and skills being taught in public schools around the state. It is important to note that schools in New Hampshire are strongly encouraged to use multiple measures of student learning to understand the effectiveness of educators.
How will the assessment contribute to student success?	The philosophy of the Smarter Balanced Assessment is to provide accurate information about what students know and are able to do, thus enabling teachers to target their teaching to fill gaps and move students forward. The system – which includes both summative assessments for accountability purposes and optional interim assessments for instructional use – will use computer adaptive testing technologies to the greatest extent possible providing meaningful feedback and actionable data that teachers and other educators can use to help students succeed.
PUBLIC REVIEW	
Are there tests available for public viewing and practice by schools and students?	Yes. Testing resources have been developed by Smarter Balanced to support schools and students in the next generation of assessment. Smarter Balanced offers both practice tests and training tests. These are available to the public and schools. While these resources were developed for schools and students involved in the Spring 2014 field test they provide a unique opportunity to learn about the assessment and prepare students. For more information about the practice and training tests visit http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Practice-and-Training-Test-Information.pdf .
What about the transparency of the assessment testing?	The goal is for the assessment to be completely transparent. All documents describing content specification, item specification, writing training materials, test blueprints, accommodations, frameworks, achievement descriptors and technology are available to the public on the Smarter Balanced website (http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/).
Are there taped webinars/webex that can be viewed?	Yes. Please visit: www.smarterbalanced.org/resources-events/webinars to find YouTube or SchoolTube webinars.

<p>Is the Practice Test (sample questions) available to the public for viewing?</p>	<p>Yes. The practice test is available at: www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/. The Pilot Test is available online for educators/students/parents and the general public to access. This can be accessed on the Smarter Balanced website at: http://www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test/. To access the Sample Items and Tasks you will have to use the following internet browsers on your desktop and laptop computers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firefox 3.6 or newer • Internet Explorer 8 or newer • Chrome 18 or newer • Safari 4.1 or newer <p>To access the Sample Items on Android and iPad tablets with 9.5 inch screens (10 inch class) or larger you will have to use the following internet browsers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chrome 18 or newer (Android) • Safari 4.1 or newer (iPad) <p>Also, Smarter Balanced has tested both the content of the assessment and the technology. Tests completed were the Cognitive Lab, Small Scale Trials and the Pilot Test of 5,000 schools in the Consortium. If you have any questions on access to the above internet browsers please contact Stanley Freeda at the NH Department of Education: Stanley.Freeda@doe.nh.gov</p>
<p>ADMINISTRATION</p>	
<p>How long will the assessment take for a student to complete?</p>	<p>The Smarter Balanced Assessments are not timed, but it is estimated that the English language arts/literacy assessment will take 4 (for elementary students) to 4 ½ hours (for high school students) and the math assessment will take 3 hours (for elementary students) to 4 hours (for high school students). In addition, students will have a brief classroom activity to introduce the topic of the performance task. Testing will occur in multiple sessions, so students will typically spend 1 to 2 hours per day on the assessments over a few days</p>
<p>What are the technology requirements to administer the assessment?</p>	<p>The Smarter Balanced assessments have been designed to work with the computing resources in schools today. The comprehensive technology requirements report at minimum detail bandwidth, hardware and operating system specifications for devices to administer the assessment. See more detail on the SBAC website http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/</p>

<p>What does it cost for NH to participate in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium?</p>	<p>The cost of developing the Smarter Balanced assessment system is funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Assessment Program. The U.S. Department of Education awarded \$330 million to two groups of states – the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) – to develop a valid next-generation assessment.</p> <p>SBAC, of which New Hampshire is a governing state member, is governed and directed by its member states. After development is complete, most states can expect to spend less or the same on Smarter Balanced assessments than they do on current assessments. The projected per pupil cost for the summative assessment is \$22.50, which is what we currently spend on NECAP – NH’s current statewide assessment. There is no assessment charge to school districts to participate in the Smarter Balanced Assessment.</p>
<p>Did NH participate in the Pilot Test assessment system?</p>	<p>Yes. The Pilot Test of the assessment system started in late winter of 2013. It included items and performance tasks that are under development giving the assessment team inside information on how these items and tasks perform in a real-world setting. This assessment was administered to grades 3-8, 11 at volunteer and select schools within the state.</p>
<p>Did NH participate in the Field Test of the assessment system?</p>	<p>A Field Test of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System took place from March 25 through June 13, 2014, culminating a three-year, multi-stage research and development process to ensure the assessment works properly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than four million students participated in the Field Test across 21 states. • In NH 11,000 students participated in the field test. • This practice run helped to ensure that the assessments are accurate and fair for all students. It also offered teachers and schools a chance to practice test administration procedures, and students the opportunity to experience the new assessments.
<p>How does computer adaptive testing (CAT) work?</p>	<p>The assessment system capitalizes on the precision and efficiency of Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) for both the mandatory summative assessment and the optional interim assessment. This approach represents a significant improvement over traditional paper-and-pencil assessment used in many states today. Computer adaptive testing adjusts to a student’s ability by basing the difficulty of future questions on previous answers, providing more accurate measurement of student achievement, particularly for high and low-performing students.</p>
<p>What if my school does not have the infrastructure to support computer adaptive testing?</p>	<p>The commitment is to help schools transition successfully to next-generation assessment. Technology Readiness Tools (TRT) will help identify infrastructure gaps and plan for future needs in the districts and schools. The TRT will help schools in capturing/reporting key readiness indicators, such as type of computers/local network/bandwidth infrastructure and local staff resources. This will help in the overall evaluation of technology readiness for the coming transition of the assessment.</p> <p>Contact for Technology Assistance: Stanley Freeda at the NH Department of Education: Stanley.Freeda@doe.nh.gov</p>
<p>RESULTS</p>	
<p>Will Smarter Balanced be a valid assessment?</p>	<p>Smarter Balanced states have and will continue to use test development best practices and research for determining the validity and reliability of the assessment. The test development process of Smarter Balanced seeks to make explicit the claims that test users can make when interpreting student scores. This was and continues to be accomplished by constructing a detailed and rigorous framework of planning and assessing the construction, delivery, accessibility and outcomes of the test throughout the process.</p>

How is the assessment going to be used to help improve teaching and learning?	The assessment will be administered online and will go beyond multiple choice questions to include performance tasks that allow students to demonstrate research, writing, and analytical skills. Accommodations for students with disabilities and English language learners will be part of the system that show progress of student(s) and can be accurately measured. A reporting system will provide easy-to-understand data on growth and achievement. The reports will present students, parents, teachers, principals and others with information that can be used to help students make greater progress.
Will the data collected on students be intrusive/inappropriate?	<p>No. New Hampshire makes its own policies on collection, storage and the use of student data according to NH privacy laws. Smarter Balanced must adhere to all state and federal laws pertaining to the collection and storage of such data like that of the current NECAP and NAEP testing. The following websites are useful in understanding federal and state law on privacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy and Security of NH Assessment Data FAQ http://www.education.nh.gov/spotlight/ccss/documents/faq_privacy.pdf • Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html • No Child Left Behind (NCLB): http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.html • Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ129 • Education Reform Sciences Act of 2002: http://www.ed.gov/p-12-reform • Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html • New Hampshire Department of Education Law: http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/XV/193-C/193-C-11.htm; http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2014/HB1587.pdf
Are there any concerns about test security? (cheating or tampering)	The summative assessment design allows states to administer different tests during the twelve week testing period each academic year. Computer adaptive assessments for students are based and customized on their performance during test taking. Each question is uniquely different. The results are captured electronically so the possibility for it to be tampered with cannot happen once the administration is complete.
Do the assessments result in standardization of teaching and learning?	No, absolutely not. Smarter Balanced makes sure that teachers and students have high quality data, tools and resources to support improvement. The assessment is not only an end-of-year test. The assessment system will provide flexibility of non-secured test items that teachers can use throughout the year at their discretion. These are instructional improvement tools, but they do not tell teachers how to teach.
Does a longitudinal academic growth model relate to assessment work?	Reporting student growth is a priority to Smarter Balanced states. The growth measure will describe relative growth and that of growth expected giving prior achievements, and comparing growth to their peers to which students are on track to college and career readiness.
Will the assessment include scaled scores and performance scores like that of NECAP?	Yes. At this time, scaled scores to assess year to year data and performance scores, “Proficient with Distinction/Proficient/Partially Proficient/Substantially Below Proficient,” will continue as they currently do with NECAP.