



Smarter Balanced Accessibility and Accommodations: Meeting the Needs of All Students

Smarter Balanced is a state-led consortium creating next-generation student assessments that will be available in the 2014-15 school year. Accessibility is a core principle of the design process. The Smarter Balanced assessment system will provide accurate measures of achievement and growth for students with disabilities and English language learners. The assessments will address visual, auditory, and physical access barriers—allowing virtually all students to demonstrate what they know and can do.

Key Features of Smarter Balanced

- ▶ Includes tools that will improve accessibility for all students, while also supporting accommodations to meet the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners.
- ▶ Optional interim assessments provide information about student progress throughout the year to help teachers differentiate instruction.
- ▶ Measures student achievement and growth in English language arts/literacy and mathematics in grades 3-8 and 11.

Designed for All Students

The Smarter Balanced assessment system uses technology to deliver assessments that fit the needs of individual students. Items and tasks will be associated with a variety of accessibility tools and accommodations that can be delivered to students automatically based on their profile.

Accessibility tools include, but are not limited to: foreground and background colors; tactile presentation of content (e.g., Braille); and translated presentation of content in signed form and select languages. Online delivery of Smarter Balanced assessments ensures that students can take a test individualized to meet their needs at the same time as their peers.

Developed with Experts

Smarter Balanced is working with educators, students, and experts in the field to design and test the assessment system. In addition to a state-led Accessibility and Accommodations Work Group, the Consortium works with advisory panels on English language learners and students with disabilities to ensure that the assessments are developed using principles of Universal Design and research-based best practices.

In 2012, member states, Smarter Balanced staff, and leading experts contributed to the development of a conceptual framework that will guide the development of common test accessibility and accommodations policies. This model will help ensure that students with special needs receive appropriate supports no matter where they live. In addition, Smarter Balanced is conducting research to better understand how English language learners and students with disabilities respond to computer-based assessment items and performance tasks, as well as accessibility and accommodations tools.

In early 2013, Smarter Balanced will conduct a Pilot Test across Smarter Balanced member states to better understand how students respond to assessment items. In addition, all assessment items and performance tasks will be reviewed for accessibility, style, and bias and sensitivity before being administered to ensure they minimize or eliminate barriers to participation and provide accurate measurement of student ability.

Assessment Implementation Timeline

- ▶ 2011-12 school year—Develop accessibility and accommodations policy framework
- ▶ 2013-14 school year—Disseminate documents and training materials to support professional learning
- ▶ 2014-15 school year—Implementation of assessment system

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Visit SmarterBalanced.org to learn more about the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and sign-up to receive our monthly eNewsletter. For more information, please contact Magda Chia (Magda.Chia@SmarterBalanced.org), director of support for under-represented students.