

Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) Q & A

Seattle Public Schools

Test Administration/Time

Q: Are the tests timed?

A: Tests are untimed. Students can take additional time to finish test items. Once students are finished with a test section, they will not be able to return to that section.

Q: How long will testing take?

A: Estimated total testing times are approximately the same as for MSP:

- 3rd-5th = 7 hrs.
- 6th-8th = 7.5 hrs.
- 11th = 8.5 hrs.

Q: How many tests or days of testing will this take for students?

A: Students are tested in two areas: English Language Arts and mathematics. There are 2 sections for each of those tests - a performance task and non-performance task. There are a total of two math sessions and three reading sessions. Each session is done on a separate day and takes approximately one to one-and-a-half hours to complete. Additionally, students are given a short half-hour classroom lesson before they work on the performance task to provide background on the topic or theme of the task.

Technology

Q: Will all testing be done on computers or will paper/pencil testing be available?

A: Districts have the option of continuing to use paper/pencil testing for 3 years. The plan for SPS is to have most buildings on the computer testing for the spring of 2015 tests. There are several reasons for this. The paper/pencil alternative cannot provide adaptive testing, will not be able to show growth, does not provide a consistent testing experience for students, and incurs a significant cost to the district.

While the online test will also provide a significant number of accommodations, it should be noted that any student whose IEP dictates a paper-and-pencil delivery should continue to have that option.

Scoring/Reporting

Q: Will the Smarter Balanced writing assessments be written online and how will they be scored?

A: Writing assessments will be written by students online.

Q: Is the scoring and reporting scale the same as for MSP?

A: No, our current MSP tests have a common “cut score” of 400 to be labeled “proficient” across all grades. The scale is not designed to compare scores across grades. A score of 415 on the 3rd-grade test is not necessarily a lower performance than a score of 417 on a 4th-grade test. SBAC uses a new vertical scale with different “proficient” cut scores for each grade.

Q: What does “vertically scaled” mean?

A: The new SBAC tests use one vertical scale across all grades (like the RIT scale for MAP), so each grade will have a different “proficient” cut score. A difference in scores reflects known amounts of growth (e.g. a scale score of 345 in 3rd grade is comparable to a 345 in 4th grade). As such, the new vertical scale will allow for the measurement of student growth from year-to-year.

Accessibility & Accommodations

Q: Will paper and pencil testing be available for students whose IEP dictates that?

A: While the online test will also provide a significant number of accommodations, it should be noted that any student whose IEP dictates a paper-and-pencil delivery should continue to have that option.

Q: What accommodations are available for students?

A: There are three levels of accommodations available to students:

- Universal tools such as calculators, dictionaries, and breaks are available for all students.

- Designated supports such as translations of directions/glossaries and scribes are available when indicated by a teacher or other adult.
- Accommodations such as ASL, Braille, and read alouds are available only for students with 504s and IEPs.

Accommodations can be viewed at <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/default.aspx>.

Professional Development & Informational Resources

Q: Where can I get more information on the Smarter Balanced assessments?

A: Further information across many topics is available to teachers and families at the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium website: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org>.

Q: Will there be any informational sessions and training provided to teachers?

A: Yes, Curriculum and Instruction will be providing informational resources to teachers training sessions in 2014-15.

Q: Can I see what the test looks like? How about students and families?

A: The tests are secure and actual test items are not viewable. However, practice tests with similar items are available for viewing on the Smarter Balanced website, including math, ELA, and performance tasks: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/technology/>

Participation

Q: Who will be taking the SBAC tests?

A: For the 2013-14 school year, approximately 4 million students participated in the field test including students from Seattle Public Schools.

For the 2014-15 school year, students in the state of Washington (in tested grades) will move to the Smarter Balanced assessments. Students on WAAS Portfolio will have a new portfolio option (refer to the OSPI website for more information).

Q: Why are we moving to a whole new assessment suite? Why can't we stick with MSP?

A: In 2010, the US Department of Education awarded grants to two groups of states to develop next generation assessments for the new Common Core State Standards.

Washington joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and will use the new tests for mathematics and English Language Arts students in grades 3-8 and 11.

Changes from MSP to SBAC

Q: What is new or different about the SBAC tests compared to the MSP?

A: The Smarter Balanced assessments:

- Include three components: a summative test (replacing the MSP), interim tests to give teachers more timely information on student performance, and a digital library of resources for teachers.
- Are designed as online, computer-adaptive measures. On a computer-adaptive test (like the MAP test), as students answer questions the difficulty of items will adjust to more precisely identify a student's level of performance (particularly at the low and high end of the spectrum).
- Have a wider-array of test item types, including technology-enhanced items and performance tasks.
- Use a new vertical reporting scale that allows educators and families to compare scores and see growth across years.
- Allows for the possibility of quicker-turnaround on results. Results can be received in weeks instead of months.

Interim Assessments

Q: What are interim assessments?

A: Interim assessments are meant to provide more timely information to teachers and families regarding how students are progressing towards standards, before students take a summative test at the end of the year. Interims are typically given 2-4 times per year and give teachers feedback to inform and adjust instruction.

Q: When will the interim assessments be made available to schools?

A: The SBAC will provide interim assessments in the late fall of 2014. The latest information is that these will be available in the November/December timeframe.

High School

Q: Will there be a testing window for high school students to complete the assessments, or will students be expected to test the same day?

A: There will be a high school testing window. That has not yet been set by OSPI.

Performance Tasks

Q: What is a performance task and why are kids being asked to perform them?

A: Performance tasks ask students to apply their learning to solve real-world problems. They consist of a collection of questions around a single topic or scenario. Performance tasks measure more complex skills and abilities such as depth of understanding and research skills, which are difficult to assess using traditional test item-types such as multiple choice and constructed response. They will take one or two class periods to complete.

Q: Are there performance tasks at all grade levels?

A: Yes, teachers will direct a 20-30 minute classroom activity to provide students with background and context on the topic of the performance task. Students will then independently do an online performance task.

Q: Will proctors/teachers be given a script to standardize the classroom activity?

A: Yes. The lesson is scripted, but does allow for student discussion.

Q: Are the Performance Tasks going to be written online and scored at the state level or are these classroom-based assessments?

A: Performance tasks will be written online and, most likely, scored by human readers.

Q: Who will be scoring the writing performance tasks?

A: The consortium plans to involve teachers in the scoring process.