

Smarter Balanced: Created by Educators for Students

More than 40 states are now using the Common Core State Standards, which spell out mathematics, reading, and writing skills students need to learn grade-by-grade to be on a path for success after high school. Recognizing they needed better ways to measure the writing, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills, nearly half the states banded together to create the Smarter Balanced Assessment System. There are 18 Smarter Balanced governing states and one territory, as well as three affiliate members.

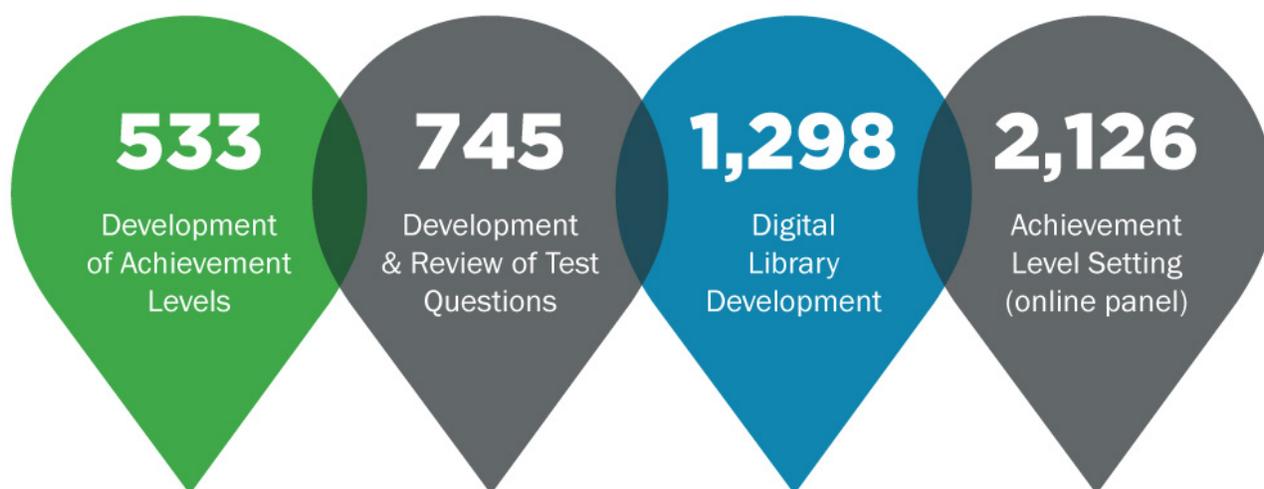
The mission of Smarter Balanced is to improve teaching and learning by providing high-quality information, tools, and resources to support teachers and students. Smarter Balanced includes new end-of-year tests that will give students, parents and educators better information about how they are progressing. Smarter Balanced isn't just an end-of-year accountability test; it also features optional interim assessments to use throughout the year and a rich Digital Library of tools, practices, and professional development resources to support teachers.

The Smarter Balanced assessments were developed through collaboration with educators and administrators. Smarter Balanced assessments offer significant improvements over tests of the past, including writing at every grade, more open-ended questions instead of multiple choice, and questions where students demonstrate real research, writing, and problem-solving skills. Taking advantage of the power of technology, the assessments also feature state-of-the-art accommodations for students with varied learning abilities.

Educator Involvement

Smarter Balanced was developed by teachers for students. More than 4,700 educators contributed to the creation of the Smarter Balanced system. Teachers contributed at each step of the development of Smarter Balanced, from helping to write the actual test questions, to creating the tools in its Digital Library, to deciding the appropriate achievement levels to show a student has met the standards.

Figure 1. Number of educators who helped create Smarter Balanced



Quality

Educators looked at the best existing tests, as well as emerging, innovative testing practices in order to create Smarter Balanced assessments. Taking from the “best of the best” assessments, Smarter Balanced asks students to complete performance tasks to show how they can solve problems, not just get the right answer. The assessments are adaptive, online and student-driven, and use a design platform that all students can navigate.

To assist states in supporting their at-risk students, the assessments include video accommodations for American Sign Language and embedded supports such as glossaries translated into 10 languages and 600,000 audio files. The assessments have been fully translated into Spanish and thousands of test items were given the stamp of approval from patrons on a bias and sensitivity committee.

Lead by its Member States and Territory

Smarter Balanced is a multi-state partnership, owned and operated by its 18 governing states and one territory. Smarter Balanced is committed to an unprecedented level of transparency as all members work together, and voting jointly on key decisions. All members have a voice in Smarter Balanced. Each member appoints K-12 and higher education leads to coordinate with the Consortium. The Executive Committee is elected from members and guides the work of the Consortium.

All of the key documents describing the assessment (item specifications, item writing training materials, test blueprints, accommodations framework, achievement level descriptors, technology specifications, etc.) are available to the public on the Smarter Balanced website (www.SmarterBalanced.org).

Figure 2. Smarter Balanced by the Numbers

4.2 million students took field tests in 2014 to finalize test items

600,000+ audio files created for translation glossaries (10 languages plus dialects)

33,000 questions and performance tasks created so far

4,700 educators helped develop and review test items and set achievement levels

1,168 educators developed instructional modules for the Digital Library

Learn More

- Visit the Smarter Balanced website: <http://www.SmarterBalanced.org>
- Follow us on Twitter: @SmarterBalanced

Take the Test

- Gain familiarity with the test software platform and sample test questions for grades 3-8 and 11
- Take the Practice Test: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>