



What is the Smarter Balanced Field Test?

HERE ARE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT AND THE FIELD TEST FOR SPRING 2014 TO SHARE WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

Idaho is transitioning to a new test that is aligned to the higher Idaho Core Standards in mathematics and English language arts. The transition to a new test takes time. In this case, we are phasing it in over three years. In Spring 2013, the state piloted the test in 124 schools. This spring, the state is field testing the new assessment in all of Idaho's public schools. Next year, the test will be fully implemented.

What are the benefits of the new assessment?

While the previous ISAT was a stagnant, multiple-choice-only test, Idaho is now moving to the Smarter Balanced Assessment, which will measure a student's academic performance through different questioning methods. The questions focus on real-world applications and utilizing technology so students can demonstrate what they know and are able to do at each grade level. With the new assessment, students will now be tested in a way that is essentially an extension of the classroom and more authentic to how instruction is already happening in the classroom.

Why field test in all Idaho schools?

The field test is essentially a "dress rehearsal," or an opportunity for all Idaho schools to test the test. Any time the state transitions to a new assessment, our state conducts a Field Test in order to test the validity and reliability of the new test questions. We also test each school's technology and logistics to help schools reduce technical issues related to testing. Idaho chose to conduct a Field Test in all Idaho schools this year, rather than double-testing students on the new Smarter Balanced Assessment as well as the ISAT for several reasons:

- It gives all students the opportunity to experience the new test and new types of test questions before next year when it becomes fully operational and scores are given.
- It gives every school, school administrator, and teacher a year to test out their logistics, technology and scheduling before implementing the operational test in Spring 2015.

- The state will gain better feedback by conducting the Field Test across the entire state, rather than in a selected sample.

What will we learn from the Field Test?

The state conducts a Field to test the validity and reliability of the new test questions. Through the Field Test, we will learn a number of things about the test. For example, we could learn if the instructions for a specific test question need to be rewritten so students can better understand it. We could learn that the accommodations made available for a student with special needs are not sufficient enough and need to be improved before the test is fully implemented. These are just two examples. At a local level, schools also will learn about how this new test works with their technology, school calendar and other logistics.

Which grade levels will be tested?

Students in grades 3-8 and 11 will be tested during the Field Test this spring. Schools have the option to test grades 9 and 10 as well.

How will this test be different?

The questions on the Smarter Balanced Assessment will challenge students in different ways from the ISAT. Because this test is aligned to the new Idaho Core Standards, students now are learning at a higher level in mathematics and English language arts. In the classroom, students are now expected to think more critically and problem solve more frequently. With Smarter Balanced, students will now be measured against these higher expectations on the year-end test. Instead of a multiple-choice-only test, students will be asked to explain their answers, write essays, drag and drop, and more.



Here are two examples of Smarter Balanced test questions:

Example 1: Constructed Response Question

The screenshot shows a test question interface. On the left, there is a text passage titled "When Winning Took a Backseat" by Bruce Nash and Allan Zullo. The passage describes two boys, Scott and Brad, who grew up in the same area and competed in various sports. On the right, there is a question box with a blue header containing the number "7". The question asks the student to read the sentences from the text and provide the central idea of the text and describe how Scott's decision fits the story's central idea. Below the question, there is a large empty box for the student to type their answer.

When Winning Took a Backseat
by Bruce Nash and Allan Zullo

Scott Bennett and Brad Howes grew up south of Salt Lake City in the fertile valley between the Jordan River and the towering Wasatch Mountains of Utah. The boys lived just far enough apart not to attend the same schools, but close enough to compete in the same leagues in baseball, football, and basketball.

No matter whose team won, Scott and Brad always shook hands and complimented each other on the way they played. The two didn't become close friends because they were always on opposite sides. But the boys grew up admiring each other's athletic skills.

And it was their childhood competition that forged a lasting

7

Read the sentences from the text and the directions that follow.

His friend and competitor was hurt. Scott knew what he had to do—he went back to help.

Provide the central idea of the text and describe how Scott's decision fits the story's central idea. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Type your answer in the space provided.

Example 2: Technology-Enhanced Question

The screenshot shows a technology-enhanced question interface. On the left, there is a question box with a blue header containing the number "1". The question asks the student to drag each expression into the correct column. On the right, there is a table with two columns: "Equal to 5.42" and "Not Equal to 5.42". Below the table, there are several mathematical expressions in boxes that can be dragged. One expression, "2.16 + 3.36", is currently being dragged into the "Not Equal to 5.42" column.

1

Drag each expression into the correct column.

Equal to 5.42	Not Equal to 5.42
$2.36 + 3.06$	1.80×3
	$2.16 + 3.36$

2.71×2

$9.53 - 4.11$

$8.01 - 2.69$

Release the mouse button to place the object where you want it.

Why will students not receive test scores this year?

Because this is a Field Test, we are focusing on “testing the test.” We will not be scoring the test for any student. Therefore, there will not be reportable scores available to teachers, students, or parents. However, schools will gain other valuable feedback that they can use, such as how students experienced the new question types, and how their preparations worked in administering this new test. Students will also benefit from the Field Test because they will learn how to navigate the new test environment and how to use the testing tools that will be available to them next year.

How can I help prepare my child?

Here are three ways every parent can help prepare their child for the Field Test.

- Visit <http://sbac.portal.airast.org/practice-test/> and take a few practice test questions with your child. Experience the test questions with your child before the Field Test. This can help them immensely, especially in the comfort of their own home.
- The Idaho Core Standards emphasize critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Because of this, students will be asked to think critically and problem solve on the new test. This may be new to many students who are used to the ISAT. As a parent, you can ask your child more open-ended questions throughout the day. Encourage your



child to think critically while in the grocery store or at the dinner table. Ask more “why” questions and let them know it is okay if they don’t answer right away. Problem-solving takes time.

- Encourage your child to take the Field Test seriously. While this is essentially a practice round, we want every child to try their best. Make sure your child eats a healthy breakfast, gets a lot of rest and comes to school prepared and comfortable to take this test.

How will the Field Test affect my school’s accountability rating?

The Field Test will not affect your school’s Star Rating in any way. If you are a Five-Star School this year, you will remain a Five-Star School. Because this is a Field Test, the state will not be scoring the test for any student. Therefore, we will not be able to calculate Star Rating results in Spring 2014. Instead, Star Rating results will be held steady for the 2014-2015 school year and will not change until the test is fully implemented in Spring 2015.

Will high school students have to pass the Field Test in order to graduate?

No. Because this is a Field Test, the state will not be scoring the test for any student. Therefore, no high school student will have to pass this test in order to graduate. Instead, students have been allowed to use their ISAT scores from previous years to bank the graduation requirement or local school districts have developed alternate routes to graduation for students who are sophomores this year. Students will eventually need to pass the new Smarter Balanced Assessment in order to graduate; however, the State Board of Education has not yet made a decision regarding which class that will affect or which score they will need to reach in order to graduate. Those decisions have yet to be determined.

How long is the new Smarter Balanced test?

It might take some students longer to complete the new Smarter Balanced Assessment than the ISAT. For years, educators and parents have demanded more than a multiple choice test. To administer a test that measures problem-solving and critical-thinking, it does take additional time. Right now, we have maximum estimates of what a test could take for students in elementary, middle and high school based on the initial pilot test in 124 schools. The maximum length of the test varied anywhere from 6 hours for elementary students to 7.5 hours for high school students. However, we know that we will get better estimates from the Field Test this spring. Unlike the ISAT, one advantage of this new test

is that it can be administered in chunks and tested in 45-minute or 1.5-hour pieces over several days or even weeks. Another benefit is that this new assessment is essentially an extension of the classroom and more authentic to how instruction is already happening in the classroom.

How will this new test impact student scores in the future?

Because the Idaho Core Standards are more rigorous, we anticipate the number of students scoring at grade level will drop in Spring 2015, the first year the new test is administered statewide. It will take a few years for Idaho students to master them. States that have already implemented higher standards similar to these and measured their students for the first time saw a significant drop in the number of students performing at grade level. Kentucky, for example, saw the number of students scoring proficient drop by one-third. We can expect similar results here in Idaho. It is not because our kids woke up one day and weren’t as smart as they were the day before. It’s because we are holding them to a higher standard, and that is a good thing for them and their future. In addition, states like Kentucky have seen positive improvement. For example, the state of Kentucky has seen the number of students graduating prepared for college and career increase significantly since implementing these new standards, from 34% in 2010 to 54% today.

Is Smarter Balanced only a year-end test?

Smarter Balanced is much more than a year-end test. Through Idaho’s work with other states, we have been able to develop a year-end test as well as additional tools to help Idaho’s teachers monitor students’ progress in the classroom throughout the school year. Teachers refer to these tools as formative and interim assessments. A formative assessment is a deliberate process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides actionable feedback a teacher can use to adjust ongoing teaching and learning strategies to improve student achievement. This could be a diagram, a demonstration or even the use of colored cups so students can signify if they are lost during the instruction. Interim assessments are used to measure whether or not students have mastered certain content. Typically, interim assessments are administered multiple times during a school year, usually outside of instruction, to evaluate students’ knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals in order to inform educators as to how the student is performing academically. Both of these assessment tools will be available to teachers through Smarter Balanced, beginning in the 2014-2015 school year.

