

Smarter Balanced Assessments: What Do the Scores Mean?



Smarter Balanced assessments, which are maintained and enhanced through a collaboration among 12 states and U.S. territories, measure students' performance on college- and career-aligned content standards. The Smarter Balanced

assessments are more comprehensive than many state and national tests. Smarter Balanced assessments evaluate higher-order skills through performance tasks: the English language arts/literacy assessment measures not only reading, but also listening, writing, and research; the mathematics assessment measures students' ability to engage in the operations of mathematics as well as how well students can use mathematics to analyze, solve problems and communicate their reasoning.

→ Test Components

The Smarter Balanced tests consist of a computer-adaptive assessment and a performance task. The computer-adaptive portion of the assessment provides more precision by customizing the test for each student by selecting items that match the student's performance. Using this approach, the system can use students' time more efficiently and provide more precise data with a shorter test.

The performance task allows students to apply their higher-order thinking skills by evaluating information and developing and communicating a solution to a real-world problem.

→ Test Scores

The Smarter Balanced assessments are not Pass/Fail. Each item on the test is associated with a scale score that, in part, describes its relative difficulty along a continuum of student performance. A student's test is scored based on the student's unique performance pattern in terms of both the number and difficulty of questions answered correctly.

→ Reporting Test Scores

The Smarter Balanced tests report overall student performance in each subject area, as well as more specific information regarding performance in Reading, Writing, Listening, and Research for ELA and Operations and Procedures, Problem Solving, Communicating Reasoning, and Modeling and Data Analysis for mathematics.

→ Interpretation and Use

Students' overall performance in each subject area is categorized into one of four performance levels, which describe the relative accuracy and complexity of students' performance within their grade level. The levels may be interpreted as follows:

Grade-level performance with increasing accuracy and complexity

Level 4: Students consistently demonstrate advanced grade-level knowledge and skills with deep understanding and a full range of complexity.

Level 3: Students consistently demonstrate proficient grade-level knowledge and skills with a broad range of complexity.

Level 2: Students demonstrate foundational grade-level knowledge and skills with a limited range of complexity.

Level 1: Students do not consistently demonstrate grade-level knowledge and skills.

Policymakers can use Smarter Balanced assessment results to help describe statewide student performance and to help focus state resources to best impact student outcomes.

Educators can use results, along with information from interim assessments, as additional information to help identify performance patterns among their students and to inform decisions about curriculum investments and district supports.

Families and students can use results to support conversations with students' teachers about opportunities for their students to benefit from additional support.