



Spring Testing 2015 Frequent Asked Questions

The following set of questions has been prepared to help families understand the purpose of these assessments. Additional information can be found on our district website at <http://www.djUSD.net/2015testing>

What students will be tested?

This spring, DJUSD Students in grades 3-8 and 11 will participate in the Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBAC) in English Language Arts and Math. These assessments are aligned with the California Common Core State Standards and are being used in all districts across the state. In addition, students in grades 5, 8 and 10 will be take the California Standards Test in Science.

Why is my child taking new assessments this year?

- The Smarter Balanced Assessment System is a key part of implementing the California Common Core State Standards and preparing all students for success in college and careers.
- Last year, Smarter Balanced assessments administered a “field tested.” This year the tests will be “live” and we expect results to come back to DJUSD in August 2015.
- These assessments replace existing tests, and offer significant improvements over tests of the past, including new types of questions and performance tasks that require students to apply a variety of skills to complete complex tasks that will prepare them for college and the workplace.
- Colleges in California are participating in the development of the assessments, with the goal of recognizing student scores on the grade 11 assessments as evidence that students are ready for introductory college courses and can be exempted from non-credit remedial courses through the use of the Early Assessment Program (EAP) which is embedded in the assessments. Students will need to indicate that they want these scores released to universities and colleges.

What will the assessments cover?

- The Smarter Balanced assessments will measure real-world skills in English and math, such as analytical reading, persuasive writing, and problem solving.
- Beginning in 2015, the Smarter Balanced assessments will provide an academic checkup for students by measuring real-world skills like critical thinking and problem solving. In addition, they provide real-time information during the year to give teachers and parents a better picture of where students are succeeding and where they need help.
- Beginning in 2015, in addition to providing composite scores in those two subjects, score reports will provide information on student performance in the following areas:
 - English: reading, writing, listening, and research
 - Math: concepts and procedures; problem solving and modeling/data analysis, and communicating reasoning

How long will the assessments take?

- The math and English assessments each have two components:
 - Computer-adaptive assessments: A set of assessment questions in a variety of formats that—beginning in spring 2015—will be customized to each student based on answers to previous questions. In this way, the assessments can most accurately measure each student’s knowledge and skills.
 - Performance tasks: Collections of questions and activities that are coherently connected to a single theme or scenario. These activities are meant to measure capacities such as depth of understanding, writing and research skills, and complex analysis, which cannot be adequately assessed with traditional test questions. The performance tasks will be taken on a computer (but will not be computer-adaptive) and will take one to two class periods to complete.
- These tests are not timed, but we estimate that the English assessment will take four hours for elementary students and four and a half hours for high school students. The math assessment will take three hours for elementary students and three and a half hours for high school students. Most students will have seven to eight hours of testing during the testing window.

How have students been prepared for this assessment?

- The best preparation for these assessments is Common Core aligned instruction. With the ongoing implementation of the Common Core, teachers have been adjusting their instruction to these new standards. The SBAC will assess these standards.
- Teachers at various grade levels have had access to assessments which reflect the common core.
- The SBAC Practice Test is also available for teachers to use with their students
- A Training Test will be available for teachers and students prior to the test so students can become familiar with different question types and the utilities of the computerized test.

What consequences will occur if I opt my child out of these assessments?

- Assessments help to provide valuable information to parents, teachers, and students, and we’re committed to ensuring that they are as accurate as possible and welcome feedback on ways to improve them.
- Ultimately, the greatest penalty for avoiding these assessments is not being able to provide meaningful information on where a student stands on their path to success.
- Colleges and universities in California are working with K–12 educators to develop the new assessment system, with the goal that they will be able to use assessment results to exempt students from non-credit courses that repeat material students should have learned in high school. If a high school student does not take the assessments once they become operational, he or she will not have that opportunity to earn an early exemption from these developmental or remedial courses.

How will my child’s privacy be protected?

- The California Department of Education retains control of all student information, including assessment results.
- In order to make sure the assessments are accurate and fair for all students, Smarter Balanced will collect the following student information:
 - An identification number (the Consortium recommends that this be different from the state’s official unique student identifier so that only the state can link back to a student’s official education record);
 - Race/ethnicity, gender, grade level, school attended;
 - Student eligibility for English language development services or special education services provided to the student;
 - Student eligibility for Title I compensatory programs;
 - Smarter Balanced assessment scores, achievement levels, and responses to assessment questions.
- Smarter Balanced, California, and districts cannot and will not sell student information as prohibited by federal laws like the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and California Education Code.

Can you explain the Early Assessment Program that affects 11th graders?

- The California State University (CSU) Early Assessment Program (EAP) will begin this spring. CSU will use the Smarter Balanced English language arts/literacy and mathematics performance level outcomes to provide grade eleven students, their families and their high schools early signals about a student's readiness for college-level coursework.
- California K-12 education is currently transitioning to the Common Core State Standards. AB 484, effective January 1, 2014, eliminates the existing STAR accountability program and establishes the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), which will include the EAP. Previously, only 11th grade students who were eligible to take the CST for English–Language Arts or Algebra II or Summative High School Mathematics were eligible to participate. The new assessment allows for the EAP to be embedded in the exam with no additional questions required. **This change will allow all California 11th grade students to participate in the EAP and receive early signals about their readiness for college level English and math courses.**
- All grade eleven students should have received a [letter](#) from the State of California encouraging them to authorize the release of their examination results for EAP purposes, to the CSU and/or the California Community Colleges (CCC). Students who intend to enroll at a CSU or CCC may release of scores is completed by selecting the bubble at the end of the Smarter Balanced exam.
- Students choose at the time of testing not to release their results, but decide later to do so, will be required to provide a copy of their student score report to the specific CSU campus or participating CCC.
- For more information about the EAP program visit the CCC Chancellor's Office EAP webpage at www.ccco.edu/eap.