



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What are the Connecticut Core Standards?**

The Connecticut Core Standards (CCS) were adopted by the State Board of Education in 2010. They provide teachers, students, and families with clear expectations of what a student should know and be able to do at each grade level. The standards focus on English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, as well as literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects in Grades 6–12. School districts develop local curricula based on these college and career standards. Standards, high-quality curriculum, and instruction prepare students to meet the demands of 21st-century study, work, and life. Visit [www.CTCoreStandards.org](http://www.CTCoreStandards.org) for more information.

### **What are the Smarter Balanced assessments?**

The Smarter Balanced assessments are high-quality tests in English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics that measure student achievement and growth on the Connecticut Core Standards.

### **Who developed the Smarter Balanced assessments?**

Teachers and administrators from several states, including Connecticut, worked together with renowned education and measurement experts to develop the high-quality Smarter Balanced assessments. They consulted with parents, students, and other stakeholders at several points through the development process.

### **What is the Smarter Balanced summative assessment?**

The Smarter Balanced summative assessment is the culminating evaluation of student performance relative to the Connecticut Core Standards. It provides an efficient and reliable estimate of a student's overall performance in a subject area relative to grade-appropriate standards that enable valid interpretations of student achievement and progress.

### **What can results from the Smarter Balanced summative assessment tell us?**

Results from the summative assessment can tell the student, the parent, and the teacher if the student is making overall academic progress and is on track to readiness for college and career. Aggregate results (e.g., district, school, grade level) can tell us if all students — regardless of zip code, family income, dominant language, or disability — are achieving and making progress academically toward readiness for college and career. It is important to remember that the summative assessment is an important indicator of student achievement and progress, but it is not the only one.

### **Why does Connecticut assess students annually in English language arts/literacy and mathematics?**

Federal and state laws require that all students in Grades 3 through 8 and once in high school be assessed annually in English language arts and mathematics. This annual summative assessment serves as an important academic checkup and an accountability measure that helps us know if we are delivering on the promise of a high-quality public education to all students.

### **What are the components of the Smarter Balanced summative assessment?**

The Smarter Balanced ELA and mathematics summative assessments include a computer adaptive test; the mathematics test also includes a performance task.

### **What is a computer adaptive test?**

A computer adaptive test adjusts the test to each student by basing the difficulty of future questions on previous answers. This provides a more accurate measurement of student achievement.

**What are the mathematics performance tasks?**

The mathematics performance tasks challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to explore and analyze a real-world scenario. They can best be described as collections of questions and activities that are connected to a single theme or scenario. These activities measure a student's depth of understanding.

**What supports are available to students?**

Accommodations and supports for students with disabilities or who are English learners/multilingual learners are built into the test delivery system so that the progress of students can be measured accurately.

**When are the Smarter Balanced summative assessments administered?**

Smarter Balanced summative assessments are administered to students in Grades 3–8 during the last nine weeks of school. Please note that effective 2015-16, the Connecticut School Day SAT serves as the high school summative assessment in ELA and mathematics in lieu of Smarter Balanced.

**How long does it take a student to complete the Smarter Balanced summative assessments?**

Smarter Balanced assessments are designed as untimed tests. On average, students complete both the ELA and mathematics tests in under four hours; however, some students may need and are afforded more time.

**What type of scores are provided on the summative assessment?**

Each subject area test, i.e., ELA or mathematics provides the following scores:

1. An overall score: This score is reported in scale score units.
2. An overall performance level: Scoring in the Level 3 or Level 4 range is a challenging yet reasonable expectation for Connecticut students.
3. Performance in three areas of knowledge and skills: Above Standard, At/Near Standard, or Below Standard performance is provided for each area.

Note: The Connecticut Smarter Balanced summative assessment is only one indicator of a student's performance, therefore, the results should be used along with other information, such as classwork and other tests, when making educational decisions.

**What are the Smarter Balanced interim assessments?**

The Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments are optional assessments that can be administered to evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to a specific domain or sub-skill (e.g., "Read Informational Text" or "Numbers and Operations in Base Ten"). They are designed to inform decisions primarily at the classroom level, but may also extend to the grade/school level. They are best administered in domain blocks, a few times a year, based on the needs of the teacher/grade-level team and the curriculum.

**Where can I get more information?**

Visit the Connecticut State Department of Education Web site ([www.ct.gov/sde](http://www.ct.gov/sde)) for more information about the **Connecticut Core Standards** and the **Smarter Balanced assessments**, including practice tests for each grade and subject.