

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Communications Toolkit for School and District Leaders





COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEADERS

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TALKING POINTS

The Smarter Balanced assessments are a key part of implementing the Common Core State Standards and preparing all students for success in college and careers.

- The Common Core State Standards establish consistent academic expectations in English and mathematics for the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in college and careers. More than 40 states have adopted these standards and are working to provide teachers and students the support they need to reach them.
- Beginning this year, Smarter Balanced assessments will replace existing tests in English and math. They offer significant improvements over tests of the past, including writing at every grade, new question types, and performance tasks that ask students to demonstrate an array of research, writing, and problem solving skills.
- The assessments provide information and tools for teachers and schools to improve instruction and help all students succeed—regardless of their background. The assessment system includes a wide array of accessibility tools for all students and accommodations—such as Braille—for those who need them.

Smarter Balanced is more than just a year-end test. Teachers will have access to resources that help them check in on student progress throughout the year.

- The **Digital Library** is an online collection of resources to help teachers implement classroom-based assessment practices. The Digital Library encourages collaboration and interaction, allowing teachers to rate materials and share their classroom experiences through online discussions. The Digital Library is available to teachers now.
- **Optional interim assessments** that allow schools to check student progress and provide information to help teachers plan and improve instruction. Schools will have two flexible administration options: Interim Comprehensive Assessments that mirror the year-end assessment or Interim Assessment Blocks that focus on smaller sets of related standards and provide more detailed information for instructional purposes. The interim assessments will be available for grades 3-8 and high school beginning in winter 2014-15.
- **Year-end summative assessments** accurately describe both student achievement and growth of student learning in English and math. Summative assessments include a computer adaptive test and performance tasks that challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to respond to real-world problems. The summative assessments will be administered in grades 3-8 and 11, and will be available to schools in spring 2015.

Smarter Balanced assessments provide an academic check-up and are designed to help teachers and parents know whether students are on track to be college- and career-ready by the time they graduate.

- Because the new assessments measure higher standards, the definition of grade-level performance will be higher than it was with old tests.
- For the first few years, it's likely that fewer students will meet grade-level standards. This does not mean that our students are doing worse than previous years, but rather that students are being assessed by more rigorous academic standards than before. Results should improve as teachers and students become more familiar with the standards.
- As a result, it's likely that fewer students will meet grade level standards, especially for the first few years. Results should improve as students have additional years of instruction



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aligned to the new standards and become better equipped to meet the challenges they present.

SUGGESTED OUTREACH TIPS

It's important to engage parents and other concerned community members with information about the Common Core and new assessments before the first tests are administered. Superintendents, principals, and other education leaders play an important role in helping parents and community members understand the changes going on in our schools and what they will mean for students. The following suggestions are intended to assist schools and district leaders in communicating about the Smarter Balanced Assessment System.

Superintendents and District Leaders

- **Create or customize factsheets for parents.** Many states and school districts have developed materials to explain the standards and assessments to parents. For example, the State of Washington developed [grade-by-grade guides](#) and an [overview of statewide assessments](#).
- **Share communications resources with principals.** Resources in this toolkit—including talking points and templates—can help schools communicate.
- **Take advantage of all communications.** From enrollment letters to paystubs, school districts communicate with staff and families frequently. Basic details about the implementation of new standards and assessments can be incorporated into a variety of materials.
- **Host a webinar** open to principals and teachers to discuss the new assessments and answer questions.
- **Engage online.** District websites and social media channels can provide information for teachers, parents, and students. Consider linking to state agency websites or the [Smarter Balanced website](#). Teachers and parents may be especially interested in the [Practice Test](#).
- **Involve community leaders.** Superintendents, school board members, and other local education leaders interact frequently with local political, business, and community leaders. These interactions are a great opportunity to share information about new state standards and assessments.

Principals and School Administrators

- **Share information through school events.** Open houses and other meetings can include:
 - Presentations that provide an overview of the Common Core and the Smarter Balanced Assessment System;
 - Teacher demonstrations of what a Common Core lesson looks like in the classroom;
 - Open computer labs that allow parents to take the Smarter Balanced [Practice Test](#) to experience the assessment first-hand.
- **Provide regular updates** about the standards and assessments online and in letters to parents.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

There has been a lot of coverage of the Common Core and the Smarter Balanced assessments in the news and a lot of information—and misinformation—circulated online. Parents, teachers, and other stakeholders may have questions about the changes underway to prepare students for college and the workplace. Whatever your opinion about the new standards and assessments, it's important to have the facts. Below are common misconceptions about Smarter Balanced, along with explanations and links to additional resources that should prove helpful to school and district leaders.

Fiction: These tests represent a new federal intrusion into education

Fact: For decades, Congress has required assessments of student learning for accountability under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, known as the “No Child Left Behind Act” enacted during the Bush Administration, expanded those federal testing requirements to include state testing of every student in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. In 2010, the federal government funded the State of Washington to act on behalf of a consortium of states to develop new, next-generation assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language art/literacy and mathematics. While federal funding currently supports the research and development work of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, all policy decisions about the structure and content of the assessments are made by the member states based on input from stakeholders across the country. In September 2014, Smarter Balanced became an operational assessment system supported by its member states and house at the University of California, Los Angeles. The Consortium does not plan to seek additional funds from the U.S. Department of Education.

Fiction: Nothing is known about these new tests

Fact: All of the key documents describing the assessments (content specifications, 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](#). [Practice Tests](#) have been available to the general public on the Smarter Balanced website for each tested grade (3 through 8 and 11) and both subject areas (English language arts/literacy and mathematics) since May 2013. In October 2014, large numbers of educators, parents and interested community members will review questions and recommended achievement level scores through an innovative online panel.

Fiction: The cost of these test are unknown

Fact: Smarter Balanced has released cost estimates for its assessments that include expenses for ongoing research and development of the assessment system as well as test administration and scoring. The end-of-year summative assessment alone is estimated to cost \$22.50 per student. The full suite of summative and interim assessments and the Digital Library of formative assessment resources is estimated to cost \$27.30 per student. These costs are less than the amount that two-thirds of the Consortium's member states currently pay. These figures are estimates because a sizable portion of the cost is for test administration and scoring services that will not be provided by Smarter Balanced; states will either provide these services directly or procure them from vendors in the private sector.

Fiction: These new assessments are untested

Fact: Smarter Balanced has thoroughly tested the content of the assessment and the technology that will support the assessment. Smarter Balanced has already completed:

- **Cognitive Labs:** In late 2012/early 2013, individual students provided feedback to test developers about their experience with the innovative test questions, accommodations for students with special needs, and the testing software.
- **Small-scale Trials:** Promising types of questions and software features were further tried out with hundreds of students in late 2012/early 2013.
- **Pilot Test:** In spring 2013, more than 600,000 students at about 5,000 schools across the Consortium responded to a preliminary pool of test questions and performance tasks.
- **Field Test:** In spring 2014, the Consortium conducted a Field Test to present the entire pool of Smarter Balanced questions to more than four million students across 21 states. This practice run helped to ensure that the assessments are accurate and fair for all students. It also gave teachers and schools a chance to practice test administration procedures, and students the opportunity to experience the new assessments.

Fiction: These tests will result in the collection of intrusive and inappropriate data on children

Fact: States make all policy decisions with regard to the collection, storage, and use of student assessment data. Smarter Balanced adheres to all federal and state privacy laws, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The Consortium will not share identifiable student-level data with the federal government. The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation amending the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Education Reform Sciences Act of 2002, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) all prohibit the creation of a federal database with students' personally identifiable information.

Fiction: These tests will require advanced technology that schools don't have and can't afford

Fact: The Smarter Balanced assessments are designed to work with the computing resources in schools today. The assessments can be offered on very old operating systems and require only the minimum processors and memory required to run the operating system itself (for example, the summative assessment can be delivered using computers with 233 MHz processors and 128 MB RAM that run Windows XP). Likewise, the file size for individual assessment questions will be very small to minimize the network bandwidth necessary to deliver the assessment online. A 600 student middle school could test its students using only one 30-computer lab. To assist states that have not yet made the transition to online testing, the Consortium also will offer a paper-and-pencil option for the first three years of operational testing.

Fiction: These assessments will result in standardization of teaching and learning

Fact: A founding principle of Smarter Balanced is that teachers and students need high quality data, tools, and resources to support improvements in student learning. Smarter Balanced isn't just an end-of-year accountability test. It is an assessment system that features flexible, non-secure interim assessments to be offered at teachers' and schools'



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discretion throughout the school year and a digital library of formative assessment tools, practices, and professional development resources built by teachers, for teachers to improve the quality of information collected through the daily classroom activities of assignments, quizzes, and observation of student work. The end-of-year tests will help schools evaluate how well their students performed by comparing their aggregate data with aggregate data from other schools across the nation. The end-of-year assessments also will empower students and parents by providing them with a clear indication of how well children are progressing toward mastering the academic knowledge and skills necessary for college and career readiness.

TOP TEN FAQ

1. What are the Smarter Balanced assessments?

The Smarter Balanced assessments are a key part of implementing the [COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS OR STATE-SPECIFIC NAME] and preparing all students for success in college and careers. The [COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS OR STATE-SPECIFIC NAME] establish consistent academic expectations in English and mathematics. Smarter Balanced assessments are designed to help teachers and parents know whether students are on track to be college- and career-ready by the time they graduate. There are three components of the assessment system: a Digital Library of formative assessment resources and practices that teachers can use as needed throughout the year; optional interim assessments; and a year-end assessment.

2. When will the Smarter Balanced assessments be administered?

The summative assessment will be administered near the end of the school year. Optional interim assessments allow educators to check student progress and provide information to help teachers plan and improve instruction. Interim assessments will become available beginning in winter 2014-15 and can subsequently be used at any time during the school year. The Digital Library of resources to help teachers improve classroom-based assessment practices is available now.

3. What content areas will the Smarter Balanced assessments cover?

The Smarter Balanced assessments measure real-world skills in English and math, such as analytic reading, persuasive writing, and problem solving. 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.

4. How long will the assessments take to complete?

The year-end assessment consists of two parts: a computer adaptive test and a performance task in English and math. Performance tasks challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world problems, including activities that involve analysis of source materials and/or engagement in problem solving.

These tests are not timed, but we estimate that the English assessment will take 3.5 (for elementary students) to 4 hours (for high school students) and the math assessment will take 2.5 hours (for elementary students) to 3.5 hours (for high school students). In addition, students will have a brief classroom activity to introduce the topic of the performance task in both English and math. Testing can occur in multiple sessions, so students will typically spend 1 to 2 hours per day on the assessments over several days.

5. How are teachers involved in creating the Smarter Balanced Assessment System?

Smarter Balanced has engaged teachers throughout the development of the assessment system. Developed by and for teachers, the Smarter Balanced Digital Library is an online collection of formative assessment resources and practices aligned to the Common Core that teachers can use as needed throughout the year.

Smarter Balanced collaborated with more than 500 educators across the Consortium in the development of the interim and summative assessments. These teachers, recruited by member states, wrote test questions and participated in a review of questions for content, bias/sensitivity, and accessibility.

States may also involve teachers with scoring questions and performance tasks that require students to write and are not machine scored.

6. How does computer adaptive testing work (CAT)?

The Smarter Balanced assessment system capitalizes on the precision and efficiency of computer adaptive testing (CAT) for both the summative assessment and the optional interim assessments. This approach represents a significant improvement over traditional paper-and-pencil assessments used in many states today. Computer adaptive testing adjusts to a student's performance by basing the difficulty of future questions on previous answers, providing more accurate measurement of student achievement, particularly for high and low-performing students.

7. Will the assessment be administered on paper or only by computer?

Smarter Balanced will make a paper-and-pencil version of the summative assessment available during a three-year transition period. Both the paper-and-pencil and computer adaptive tests will follow the same test blueprint—meaning the same content areas and skills will be assessed. Smarter Balanced will conduct research to ensure that results are comparable across the two modes of assessment.

8. Does the assessment support English language learners, students with disabilities, and other students with special needs?

The assessments provide information and tools for teachers and schools to improve instruction and help all students succeed. The assessment system includes a wide array of accessibility tools for all students and accommodations—such as Braille—for those who need them. The assessments will address visual, auditory, and physical access barriers—allowing virtually all students to demonstrate what they know and can do. English language learners will have access to embedded glossaries in 10 languages and several dialects.

Smarter Balanced worked extensively with educators with experience teaching English language learners, students with disabilities and other traditionally under-represented students to design an assessment system that allows all students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

9. Will Smarter Balanced assessments replace the SAT and ACT?

No. The 11th grade summative assessment is not designed to be a college admissions test. Rather, it is designed to help students and higher education institutions better gauge which students leave high school with the English and mathematics knowledge and skills necessary for entry-level, transferable, credit-bearing courses. That's a different question than whether or not students should be admitted. Colleges and universities often admit students who are not immediately ready for credit-bearing coursework. Additionally, colleges and universities vary in how much they rely upon the SAT and ACT, and in the scores on those tests they expect students to meet.

10. How will student data be protected?

States will continue to retain control of all student information, including assessment results. Unless directed to do so by a state, Smarter Balanced will not collect information—such as student names or dates of birth—that can be used to identify individual students. No parent information will be collected. Smarter Balanced will not share student-level information with the U.S. Department of Education and will not release information to any third party without state authorization. Further, use of the Smarter Balanced assessments will result in no changes to state reporting to the U.S. Department of Education. Smarter Balanced, states, and districts cannot and will not sell student information, as prohibited by federal laws like the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.



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NEWSLETTER TEMPLATE

Preparing Students for College and Career

Preparing all students for success is at the heart of everything we do. Over the last few years, teachers at [INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT NAME] have been working to implement the [COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS OR STATE-SPECIFIC NAME]. These standards were designed to establish consistent expectations in English and mathematics for the knowledge and skills students need to succeed beyond high school. In order to assess students' mastery of the standards, new assessments were developed that give teachers and parents a better picture of where students are succeeding and where they need help.

This school year, Smarter Balanced assessments will replace existing year-end tests in English and math. Smarter Balanced assessments provide an academic checkup by measuring students' knowledge and important skills such as critical thinking and problem solving.

The new assessments are more than just a year-end test. Teachers have access to the Smarter Balanced Digital Library—an online collection of resources to help teachers improve classroom-based assessment practices. Developed by and for teachers, the library will include valuable resources, like instructional modules, that teachers can use in the classroom to gauge student progress and tailor instruction to each student's needs.

Schools also can administer optional, interim assessments to check in on student progress and help teachers plan and improve instruction throughout the year. Schools will have two flexible administration options: Interim Comprehensive Assessments that mirror the year-end assessment; or Interim Assessment Blocks that focus on smaller sets of related standards and provide more detailed information for instructional purposes. The interim assessments will be available for grades 3-8 and high school beginning in winter 2014-15.

The year-end summative assessment consists of two parts: a computer adaptive test and performance tasks. The computer adaptive test adjusts questions based on student performance, while performance tasks challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world problems, including activities that involve analysis of source materials and/or engagement in problem solving. Summative assessments will be available to [INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT NAME] beginning next spring.

Since the new assessments measure higher standards, the definition of grade level performance is also more rigorous than it was with old tests. For the first few years, the percentage of students meeting grade level standards is likely to be lower. We are committed to working with teachers and parents to provide support for all students to succeed. As students have more years of instruction aligned to the standards, we will likely see performance increase.

Throughout the year, we will keep you informed about the new standards and assessments. For more information about the Smarter Balanced assessments, visit:

<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/> or [INSERT DISTRICT/STATE ASSESSMENT WEBPAGE].



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PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

Contact: [INSERT CONTACT INFO]

Smarter Balanced Assessments Set to Replace Existing [State] Test
Assessments will be a key part of [INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT NAME] efforts to prepare all students for college and careers

[INSERT CITY/STATE]— Beginning this school year, [INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT NAME] will begin administering the Smarter Balanced assessments for [grades 3-8, 11/high school] in English and mathematics. The assessments will replace the [INSERT EXISTING TEST NAME].

Aligned to the [COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS OR STATE-SPECIFIC NAME], the Smarter Balanced Assessment System is designed to help teachers and parents know whether students are on track to be college- and career-ready by the time they graduate. Assessment results will provide an academic checkup by measuring students' real-world skills such as critical thinking and problem solving.

[INSERT QUOTE FROM PRINCIPAL/DISTRICT LEAD]

The assessment system is made up of three components: a Digital Library of formative assessment resources and practices; optional interim assessments; and a year-end summative assessment.

Teachers will have access to the Smarter Balanced Digital Library— an online collection of formative assessment resources and practices aligned to the [COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS OR STATE-SPECIFIC NAME] that teachers can use as needed throughout the year. The Digital Library encourages collaboration and interaction, allowing teachers to rate materials, recommend new resources, and share their classroom experiences through online discussions. The Digital Library is available now.

Optional interim assessments allow schools to check in on student progress and help teachers plan and improve instruction throughout the year. [INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT NAME] will have two flexible administration options: Interim Comprehensive Assessments that mirror the year-end assessment; or Interim Assessment Blocks that focus on smaller sets of related standards and provide more detailed information for instructional purposes. The interim assessments will be available for grades 3-8 and high school beginning in winter 2014-15.

Year-end summative assessments accurately describe both student achievement and growth of student learning in English and math. Summative assessments include a computer adaptive test and performance tasks that challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to respond to real-world problems.

[INSERT QUOTE FROM TEACHER]

Because the new assessments measure higher standards, the definition of grade level performance will be more rigorous than it was with old tests. Scores from the new assessments represent a new baseline that provides a more accurate indicator for teachers, students, and parents as they work to meet the rigorous demands of college and career readiness.



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PARENT/GUARDIAN LETTER TEMPLATE

[INSERT DATE]

Dear Parent or Guardian:

In our continuing efforts to ensure that your child – and all children/students – in [INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT] are prepared for success, I'm excited to share our efforts to set challenging academic goals and to put in place improved assessments.

In [INSERT IMPLEMENTATION DATE], [INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT] began implementing the [COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS OR STATE-SPECIFIC NAME]. Developed with input by teachers, parents, and education experts, they provide clear and consistent expectations in English and math of the knowledge, skills, and abilities students need to be successful beyond high school. In order to ensure students are on track for success, new assessments have been developed to measure where students are succeeding and where they need help.

This school year, the Smarter Balanced assessments will replace existing tests in English and math. The new assessments are a key part of implementing our new academic standards and preparing all students for success in college and careers.

The new assessments offer significant improvements over tests of the past; including writing at every grade, new question types, and performance tasks that ask students to demonstrate an array of research, writing, and problem solving skills.

Since the new assessments measure higher standards, the definition of grade-level performance is also more rigorous than it was with old tests. For the first few years, fewer students may meet grade-level standards. It's important to note that this does not mean that students are doing worse than previous years, but rather that students are being assessed by more challenging academic standards than before. We are committed to working with teachers and parents to provide support for all students to succeed.

As we look forward to a new school year, we're excited about implementing new assessments that will better prepare students for success beyond high school.

For more information about the Smarter Balanced assessments in our district, please visit [INSERT DISTRICT ASSESSMENTS WEBPAGE]. You can also learn more about Smarter Balanced at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org>.

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME]
[INSERT TITLE]



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ROBOCALL SCRIPT TEMPLATE

For Principals and District Leaders (90 seconds)

- Hello. This is [INSERT NAME], [principal/district leader] of [INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT NAME].
- I'm calling to provide information about the new and improved assessments that will replace existing tests in English and math at [INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT NAME] this fall.
- The Smarter Balanced assessments are a key part of implementing the [COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS OR STATE-SPECIFIC NAME] and preparing all students for success in college and careers. [COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS OR STATE-SPECIFIC NAME] establish consistent academic expectations in English and mathematics for the knowledge and skills students need to succeed.
- Smarter Balanced is more than just a year-end test. Teachers and parents will have access to resources that let them check in on student progress throughout the year. These assessments are designed to help teachers and parents know whether students are on track to be college- and career-ready by the time they graduate.
- Since the new assessments measure higher standards, the definition of grade level performance is also more rigorous than it was with old tests. For the first few years, it's likely that fewer students will meet grade-level standards. This does not mean that our students are doing worse than previous years, but rather that students are being assessed by more rigorous academic standards than before. Results should improve as students have more years of instruction aligned to the new standards.
- If you have questions or want more information on the new standards or the Smarter Balanced assessments, please visit our website at [INSERT DISTRICT WEBSITE], the Smarter Balanced website at www.smarterbalanced.org, or call [INSERT PHONE NUMBER]. Thank you.

SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

Overview

Social media is an excellent tool for sharing information and resources with teachers, administrators, and parents. With new resources and information available weekly, social media can help you communicate about the Common Core and new assessments instantly.

Twitter Tips

Share resources. Insert links to helpful resources such as factsheets, videos, and FAQs on the Common Core and assessments. Tweets with graphics or photos prompt the most engagement. Feel free to link to your **[INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT]**'s website or external sites like SmarterBalanced.org.

Include hashtags in your tweets. Using hashtags is the easiest and most effective way to associate your tweet with a topic/category. Here are a few suggestions on Common Core and assessments:

#assessments	#commoncore	#ELLs
#Teachers	#CCSS	#Educators
#edchat	#edtech	#edleaders

Sample Tweets:

- Beginning this year, @SmarterBalanced #assessments will replace existing tests in English and math. Learn more: [Link to **[INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT]**'s assessment page] #edchat
- Want to learn more about the new college- and career-ready #assessments? Take a practice test today: [Link to Practice Test]
- New @SmarterBalanced #assessments provide an academic check-up and info on progress toward college and career readiness. [Link to assessment factsheet]

Facebook Tips

Keep it brief. Like Twitter, Facebook allows you to communicate directly with audiences in real time. Though Facebook doesn't have a character limit, it's best to keep posts brief (in the 25-50 word range) since most users are quickly scanning through their newsfeed.

Share visuals. Include graphics and photos in your posts to catch the eye of your audience. Facebook is a popular platform among teachers, so including photos of classrooms, students, or other teachers can lead to more engagement.

Sample Facebook Post:

- Beginning this year, Smarter Balanced assessments will replace existing tests in English and math. They offer significant improvements over tests of the past, including writing at every grade, new question types, and performance tasks that ask students to demonstrate an array of research, writing, and problem solving skills. [Link to **[INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT]**'s assessment page] [Insert classroom photo]

Here are a few examples of education organizations that do a good job of communicating about the Common Core and assessments using social media. Check these out for ideas on how to engage your audiences.

- Stand for Children

- The education advocacy group frequently shares great [photos and videos](#) of teachers on Twitter.
- James B. Hunt Institute
 - This sample [Facebook post](#) includes a PTA video of a teacher sharing success stories about the Common Core.
- Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
 - CCSSO regularly shares [photos and graphics](#) with quotes and facts supporting the Common Core.
- California Department of Education
 - [This tweet](#), congratulating California students on completing the Field Test, includes a good picture of a teacher and student interacting with the assessment.

RESOURCES

Note: States are encouraged to augment this list with materials developed to support communication and assessment implementation (including training modules, the state version of the Test Administration module, etc.)

Many organizations have developed resources to explain the Common Core State Standards and aligned assessments, helping teachers as they work to increase student success in the classroom. The factsheets, videos, and instructional resources below are available for districts to post to their websites, distribute as handouts for student orientation and preparation, professional development activities, and for discussions with educators, parents, and policymakers about college- and career-ready standards and the new assessments.

Practice and Training Tests

The Practice and Training Tests are available to schools and districts for student orientation and preparation, professional development activities, and for discussions with parents, policymakers, and other interested stakeholders. The Practice and Training Tests are available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>.

- **Practice Tests**—Available since May 2013, the Smarter Balanced Practice Tests allow teachers, students, parents, and other interested parties to experience a full grade-level assessment. The Practice Tests include a variety of questions (approximately 30 questions each in ELA/literacy and math) as well as an ELA/literacy and math performance task at each grade level (3–8 and 11).
- **Training Tests**—The Training Tests were designed to provide students and teachers with opportunities to quickly familiarize themselves with the software and accessibility features used on the Smarter Balanced Field Test. The Training Test includes all new question types that were available on the Field Test organized by grade bands (grades 3 to 5, 6 to 8, and high school) and the full suite of accessibility and accommodations features that was available on the Field Test, including American Sign Language (ASL) videos for all listening questions.

Digital Library

The Digital Library is an online collection of instructional and professional learning resources contributed by educators, for educators. These resources are aligned with the intent of the Common Core State Standards and will help educators implement the formative assessment process to improve teaching and learning. Smarter Balanced created a number of materials to assist educators in using the Digital Library.

- **Videos**
 - Logging into the Digital Library and Browsing for Resources:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=howRkoMbNLo
 - Collaboration:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ZIDusa3gszw
- **Presentations**
 - Getting Started in the Digital Library:
<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Getting-Started-in-the-Digital-Library.pptx>

- Finding Resources in the Digital Library:
<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Finding-Resources-in-the-Digital-Library.pptx>
- Navigating Resources in the Digital Library:
<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Navigating-Resources-in-the-Digital-Library.pptx>

Understanding the Common Core

- **CoreStandards.org** – Created by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, this is the official online home of the Common Core State Standards. This website includes information such as background on the development process, a summary of the major features of the standards, and the standards themselves.
- **The Aspen Institute** - The Common Core State Standards: An Introduction for Families and Other Stakeholders – available in both English and Spanish—is a publication that explains what the standards are and why they are important for improving public education.
 - <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/common-core-state-standards-introduction-families-other-stakeholders>
- **Stand for Children** – Stand’s Get to the Core (<http://www.get2core.org/>) website has a variety of information and resources for parents and teachers. They walk through the standards as well as give helpful examples.
 - Infographic explaining what academic standards are:
<http://get2core.org/national/about/what-are-academic-standards>
- **Alliance for Excellent Education** – The Common Core State Standards 101 publication provides an overview of the standards, implementation details, and a helpful FAQ.
 - <http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/CommonCore101.pdf>
- **ASCD** – The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development has developed a helpful Myths and Facts document to clarify the Common Core.
 - http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/publications/policypoints/PolicyPoints_Common_Core_State_Standards.pdf
- **NASSP** - The National Association of Secondary School Principals has developed several action briefs to help school leaders and counselors with implementing the Common Core.
 - Action Brief for Secondary School Leaders:
http://www.nassp.org/Content/158/RevisedSecondaryActionBrief_Final_Feb.pdf
 - Action Brief for Elementary School Leaders:
http://www.nassp.org/Content/158/RevisedSecondaryActionBrief_Final_Feb.pdf
 - Action Brief for School Counselors:
http://www.nassp.org/Content/158/RevisedCounselorActionBrief_Final_Feb.pdf

Resources for Teachers

- **Khan Academy** – Khan Academy collaborated with Smarter Balanced, Illustrative Mathematics, and 40 educators to ensure its Common Core math materials are rigorous and fully aligned to the standards. The website includes a Common Core Map that allows teachers to explore problems related to each math standard at every grade level.
 - <https://www.khanacademy.org/commoncore/map>
- **Share My Lesson** – Website by the American Federation of Teachers and TES Connect that offers information about the CCSS and high-quality resources aligned to the standards.
 - <http://www.sharemylesson.com/article.aspx?storyCode=50000148>
- **Student Achievement Partners** – Website that offers a variety of free, high-quality materials to help educators align their instruction to the Common Core.

- <http://www.achievethecore.org/>
- **EduCore** – Tool that was developed by ASCD and provides secondary teachers with high-quality teaching and learning resources aligned to the Common Core.
 - <http://educore.ascd.org/default.aspx>
- **NEA Common Core State Standards Toolkit** – Toolkit designed to ensure members have the knowledge and understanding necessary to prepare for the implementation of the CCSS.
 - http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/EPP_CommonCore_Toolkit_Final.pdf

Resources for Parents

- **National Parent Teacher Association**
 - Series of parent guides including activities that parents can do at home to support their child's learning and tips for building stronger relationships with their child's teacher:
<http://www.pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583&navItemNumber=3363>
 - Assessment guides featuring information and background in parent-friendly language on the standards and assessments for states that have adopted the Common Core:
<http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3816>
- **Council of the Great City Schools** – A series of content and grade-specific parent roadmaps that provide detailed information for parents about the expectations of the Common Core in English and math.
 - English language arts: <http://www.commoncoreworks.org/domain/114>
 - Mathematics: <http://www.commoncoreworks.org/domain/149>
 - Artes del lenguaje en inglés: <http://www.commoncoreworks.org/Page/365>
 - Matemáticas: <http://www.commoncoreworks.org/Page/367>
- **Data Quality Campaign** – Factsheets and information about student data.
 - *Getting the Facts Straight about Education Data: Common Core State Standards–Associated Assessment Consortia:*
<http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/Facts%20about%20EdData-CCSS%20Assessments.pdf>
 - *Talking about the Facts of Education Data with Parents:*
<http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/files/Data%20Facts%20Parents%20and%20the%20Public.pdf>

Resources for State and District Leaders

- **The High Quality Assessment Project** – Tools to help state leaders navigate choices for moving forward with assessments.
 - *What Does a High-Quality Assessment Look Like?* Guide: http://www.education-first.com/files/What_Does_a_High-Quality_Assessment_Look_Like.pdf
 - Mythbuster Q&A: http://www.education-first.com/files/HQAP_mythbusters_Smarter_Balanced.pdf
- **Toolkit for Evaluating Alignment of Instructional and Assessment Materials** – Developed by CCSSO, Achieve, and Student Achievement Partners, this toolkit contains interrelated, freely available instruments for evaluating alignment to the CCSS. Each tool

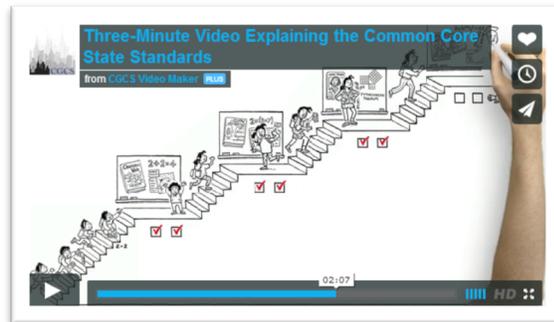
supports the expectations in the CCSS and derives from the Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards.

- o http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Digital_Resources/Toolkit_for_Evaluating_Alignme nt_of_Instructional_and_Assessment_Materials_.html

Videos

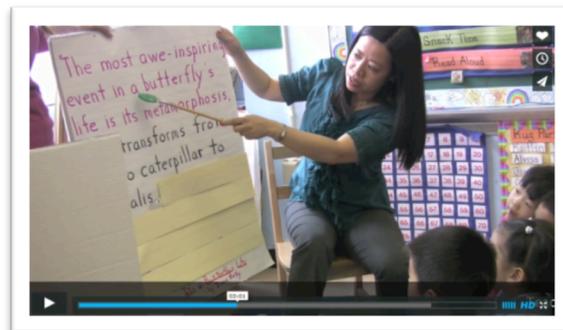
- **Council of Great City Schools –**
The Council has developed videos and public service announcements that explain how the Common Core State Standards will help students achieve at high levels.

- o <http://vimeo.com/channels/511746>



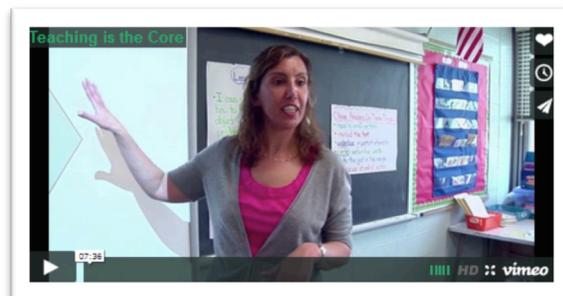
- **CGCS Teacher Training Videos –**
Videos developed by the Council of Great City Schools for central office and school-based staff and teachers as an introduction to the instructional shifts required by the CCSS.

- o English language arts and literacy:
<http://www.commoncoreworks.org/domain/127>
- o Mathematics:
<http://www.commoncoreworks.org/Page/345>



- **Student Achievement Partners –**
Collection of brief videos introducing the Common Core State Standards including teacher testimonials.

- o <http://achievethecore.org/page/762/introductory-videos-on-the-common-core-state-standards>



- **America Achieves** – The Common Core in Practice video series showcases how teachers are putting new standards into practice in their classrooms and how students are responding.
 - <http://www.americaachieves.org/issues/common-core-in-practice-great-teachers-demonstrate-moving-to-deeper-learning>

- **Teaching Channel** – Website that offers a free library of high-quality videos featuring real teachers demonstrating their best educational practices with lessons aligned to the CCSS.
 - https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos?page=1&categories=organizations_national,topics_common-core&load=1

- **CCSSO / The Hunt Institute** – A series of video vignettes to help diverse groups better understand the depth and breadth of the Common Core and how they will improve teaching and learning.
 - http://www.ccsso.org/resources/digital_resources/common_core_implementation_video_series.html

- **PTA / The Hunt Institute** – A video series developed to provide accurate information about the Common Core, educating stakeholders on the standards and empowering them to support the transition at school and home.
 - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQ5seUGdPQBxOq_U1IPfvvEXGxmPAPQbk

