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.
- States are partnering in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium to develop a new assessment system aligned to the Common Core to measure how well students are progressing **toward readiness for college and careers**.
- The Smarter Balanced assessment system will **replace existing tests**, and 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.
- In addition to measuring student achievement at the end of the school year, the Smarter Balanced assessment system will provide information during the year to give teachers and parents a better picture of where students are succeeding and where they need help.
- The work of Smarter Balanced is guided by the belief that a high-quality assessment system can provide information and tools for teachers and schools to improve instruction and help all students succeed—regardless of disability, language, or background. The assessment system include a wide array of **accessibility tools for all students and accommodations**—such as Braille—for those who need them.

A field test of the Smarter Balanced assessment system will take place from March 25 through June 6 (on request, an optional makeup week is available June 9–13), **culminating a three-year, multi-stage research and development process to ensure these assessments work properly**.

- More than three million students will participate in the field test across 22 states.
- This practice run will help to ensure that the assessments are accurate and fair for all students. It also gives teachers and schools a chance to **practice test administration** procedures, and students the opportunity to experience the new assessments.
- Smarter Balanced will use information from the field test to improve the assessments and plan for their roll-out.

The Smarter Balanced states have worked closely with administrators, teachers, and students for more than two years to ensure a smooth roll-out for the new assessments, and to make sure schools and teachers have the right supports in place.

- For the past two years, Smarter Balanced has worked directly with teachers and students across the country—through labs, discussions, the development of more than 20,000 test questions, and a preliminary pilot test last year—to ensure that the assessments accurately measure the **full breadth and depth of the Common Core**.
- We don’t expect this practice run to be perfect, and we expect to discover challenges. Working together with teachers and school administrators, states in the Smarter Balanced consortium will address any issues identified prior to the launch of the assessment system in 2014–15.