



**HOT TOPIC**

## Learning for the Future

*New English language arts and math standards will help students better understand and solve real-world problems, getting them ready for college and career opportunities..*

# Common Core State Standards

### What are learning standards?

Learning standards describe the skills and knowledge all students need to know so they can be successful. But standards don't tell teachers *how* or *what* to teach. That's up to the teachers, schools, and districts.

### What are Common Core State Standards?

Developed voluntarily and cooperatively by 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia, the Common Core State Standards offer schools, teachers, students, and parents clear, understandable, and consistent standards in English language arts (ELA) and math. The Common Core standards define the knowledge and skills students need to be prepared for college and career opportunities. They are internationally competitive and evidence-based.

The standards *replaced* Washington's math, reading, and writing learning standards. They *did not* replace our state learning standards in other subjects.

### Who developed them?

The Common Core standards were developed by the Council for Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. The two organizations convened a group to help write the standards. Washington state teachers, parents, and administrators played an important role in this process.

### Who determines state learning standards?

Each state determines its own learning standards for each subject. In addition to adopting the Common Core for ELA and math, Washington has learning standards in other content areas, known as Essential Academic Learning Requirements and/or Grade-Level

Expectations. Learning standards are revised every four to six years, with input from educators, parents, and community members from around our state.

### Why are common standards important?

Having a common set of ELA and math standards across states will result in efficiencies for students, teachers, and state budgets. For example, a student moving from one state to another should have a fairly seamless transition because the standards will be the same for both states. Teacher training programs and curricular materials can be developed using the common standards.

### When did this happen?

State Superintendent Randy Dorn adopted the Common Core State Standards in July 2011. OSPI spent the next 3 years introducing the standards to Washington teachers. They are now integrated into classrooms and will be assessed this school year.

### **For more information**

**Common Core State Standards in Washington** [bit.ly/AxfzEJ](http://bit.ly/AxfzEJ)

**CCSS Initiative** [bit.ly/WZVlbu](http://bit.ly/WZVlbu)

**Frequently Asked Questions** [bit.ly/Tv0Az0](http://bit.ly/Tv0Az0)

**WA State K-12 Learning Standards** [bit.ly/TIWuaN](http://bit.ly/TIWuaN)

# Smarter Balanced Assessment System

## What is the Smarter Balanced Assessment System?

Smarter Balanced is a comprehensive system designed to measure how well students are learning the Washington State K–12 Standards in English language arts (ELA) and math. It was developed by a multi-state partnership of educators, researchers, policymakers, and community groups.

Results from the new tests can be used to show how students, schools, and districts are performing. It will also allow states to be compared to each other using a standard tool.

## What makes up the new system?

Smarter Balanced is more than just a once-a-year test. It's a system, made up of three components:

1. The **Digital Library** contains on-demand materials and an online platform to give educators a place to share what's working in their classrooms.
2. **Interim assessments** are optional, to be offered at teachers' and schools' discretion throughout the school year. They will provide meaningful feedback that teachers can use to help students succeed.
3. **Summative assessments** are required. These computer-based tests will take place during the last 12 weeks of the school year. They will provide families with a clear indication of how well their children are progressing toward mastering the academic knowledge and skills necessary for college and career readiness.

Smarter Balanced assessments and resources will go beyond multiple-choice questions. They will include short (one or two sentences) and long (one paragraph or longer) responses and performance tasks that allow students to demonstrate real-world problem solving.

## How will state testing change?

Last year, students in grades 3–8 took the **Measurements of Student Progress (MSP)**. The Smarter Balanced tests will replace the math, reading, and writing portions of the MSP. (Fifth and eighth graders will continue to take the MSP in science.)

Eleventh graders will take the Smarter Balanced ELA and math tests to measure career and college readiness. (Visit [www.WAtesting.com](http://www.WAtesting.com) to see graduation assessment requirements listed by Class.)

## Will the tests be more difficult?

Fewer students will be considered “proficient” on the tests than we have seen in the past, at least initially, because the new ELA and math standards are more difficult than our former state learning standards. Smarter Balanced tests set a new baseline for student test scores, measuring the skills and knowledge students need to succeed after high school, including problem-solving, writing, and critical thinking. We expect this dip in proficiency to be temporary.

## What about students with special needs?

The Smarter Balanced assessment system will address visual, auditory, physical access, and language barriers — allowing virtually all students to demonstrate what they know and can do. Students with severe cognitive challenges will be assessed on their ELA and math knowledge using the Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement (WA-AIM).

### For more information

**Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**  
[bit.ly/TuN9iY](http://bit.ly/TuN9iY)

**Accessibility & Accommodations** [bit.ly/RGbZQo](http://bit.ly/RGbZQo)

**Frequently Asked Questions** [bit.ly/R4OcZG](http://bit.ly/R4OcZG)

**Top 10 Reasons Washington Is Switching to Smarter Balanced** [bit.ly/smartertop10](http://bit.ly/smartertop10)



The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is the primary agency charged with overseeing K–12 education in Washington state. Led by State School Superintendent **Randy Dorn**, OSPI works with the state's 295 school districts to administer basic education programs and implement education reform on behalf of more than one million public school students. [www.k12.wa.us](http://www.k12.wa.us)

**Published April 2015 | Publication No. 15-0020**