Smarter Balanced Assessments: Frequently Asked Questions

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What's on the tests?

The Smarter Balanced tests consist of two parts, a computer adaptive portion and a performance task. The tests are designed to measure student knowledge of grade level subject matter, critical thinking, analytical writing, and problem solving skills. Assessments are aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts/literacy and mathematics.

The blueprints below provide information about the content of the Smarter Balanced tests, including the number of items and depth of knowledge associated with each assessment target.

- ELA Smarter Balanced Blueprint
- Mathematics Smarter Balanced Blueprint

How are the tests scored?

Results of the computer adaptive portion and performance task are combined to yield an overall score in both English-language arts/literacy and mathematics. Students receive 3 types of scores, including (1) an overall numerical score, or scaled score (2) an achievement level, which shows how a student performed compared to the standards, and (3) claim level scores, which show how a student performed on smaller skills within each subject.

- A Note from IUSD about Your Student's Score Report
  This document was mailed home with your child's score report and includes information about the CAASPP assessments, how scores will and will not be used, and additional resources.

Additional Resources from the California Department of Education:

- Sample Student Score Report
- Understanding Your Student Score Report (video)
  This five-minute video provides information about how to read the 2016-17 score report. A video has not yet been released for 2017-18.
- Guide to Understanding the Student Score Report (pdf)
  These three-page guides are available for each grade level and support parents in understanding their child's score report. Guides will also be available in Spanish, Armenian, Chinese, Hmong, Korean, Tagalog, and Vietnamese at this link.
- Smarter Balanced Scaled Score Ranges
  This link provides the minimum and maximum scaled scores for each grade level and subject area.

How will results be used?

Like class assignments and report cards, scores on the Smarter Balanced Assessments provide one way to assess student progress. These scores provide one piece of information about your child's ELA and math skills and serve as a starting point for conversations with his or her teacher. Scores will NOT be used as the sole determining factor for any high stakes decisions, including but not limited to promotion or retention, intervention, or qualification for special programs.

What can I do to help prepare my child for the tests?

- Smarter Balanced Practice and Training Tests
  Practice and Training Tests help students become familiar with the look and feel of the Smarter Balanced Assessments, and provide practice using the embedded tools, supports, and accommodations. Please note that these tests do NOT show the content that will be on the summative test, provide scores, or predict student performance on the actual test.
- Parent Roadmaps
  Parent Roadmaps are available for each grade level in both English language arts/literacy and mathematics. These Roadmaps provide information about grade level expectations and things parents can do to support student learning outside of school.

What is the Early Assessment Program?

Through the Early Assessment Program (EAP), California State Universities (CSU) and participating California Community Colleges (CCC) may use 11th grade Smarter Balanced Assessment results as an early indicator of student readiness to take college level courses.

Please note the important points below:

- To participate in EAP students must authorize the release of their Smarter Balanced results for both ELA and mathematics to the CSU and CCC systems. Students who do not release results at the time of testing may later submit a copy of their score report to the CSU or community college in which they have enrolled.
- The release of Smarter Balanced results will NOT impact a student's application for admission. Results will only be used to determine a student's course placement after he or she has been admitted to the university.
- Smarter Balanced Assessments provide one tool for determining college readiness and course placement. Advanced Placement (AP), ACT, and SAT scores may also be used.

For additional information including criteria for course placement, a list of participating community colleges, and information for students, please visit the California Department of Education's Early Assessment Program website.

How did IUSD perform overall on the Smarter Balanced Assessments?

- Scores for Schools, Districts, and Counties
  The California Department of Education website provides CAASPP scores by school, district, county, and state.

Where can I find additional information?

- Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
  The Smarter Balanced website includes additional information about the assessments, sample questions, and resources for parents. Please note that this website includes general resources for Smarter Balanced Assessments, and is not specific to California.
- What is Computer Adaptive Testing?
  This 13-minute video provides more detailed information about computer adaptive testing and how it works.
- Performance Task Overview
  This 18-minute video provides more detailed information about performance tasks, including samples of what they look like in English-language arts/literacy and mathematics. Please note that Classroom Activities have been discontinued.
- Embedded Universal Tools and Online Features
  This 21-minute video provides more detailed information about the Universal Tools and online features available for the CAASPP assessments, including information about how to use these tools and screenshots of what tools look like within the test.
- Smarter Balanced Achievement Levels
  This page contains information about Smarter Balanced Achievement Levels, including scaled score ranges for each level and information about how achievement levels were determined.