New Hampshire
Department of Education
Serving New Hampshire's Education Community

Questions	Answers
What is the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium?	Smarter Balanced is a state-led consortium working collaboratively to develop next-generation assessment with the alignment to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS – see Frequently Asked Questions), New Hampshire's (NH) new standards in mathematics and English language arts.
What are the Race to the Top Assessment grants?	The U.S. Department of Education awarded $330 million to two groups of states – the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) – to develop a valid next-generation assessment. www.smarterbalanced.org/pub-n-res/smarter-balanced-assessment-consortium-race-to-the-top-application-appendices/ The grants were awarded through the Race to the Top Assessment Program, authorized under The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). They provided funding to consortia of states to develop assessments that are valid, support and inform instruction, provide accurate information and measure student achievement against standards. The standards chosen to be tested by both consortia were the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and mathematics. For more information: http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/index.html
What will the assessment accomplish?	The assessment will provide educators, parents and students with the information they need to continuously improve teaching and learning that will help ensure students graduate high school college- and career-ready. The assessment will serve all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.
When will the new assessment be in place?	The assessment system will be fully implemented in the spring of 2015. States will administer the summative assessment at the last 12 weeks of the school year.
How will the assessment contribute to student success?	The philosophy of the Smarter Balanced Assessment is to provide accurate information about what students know and can do, thus enabling teachers to target their teaching to fill gaps and move students forward. The system – which includes both summative assessments for accountability purposes and optional interim assessments for instructional use – will use computer adaptive testing technologies to the greatest extent possible to provide meaningful feedback and actionable data that teachers and other educators can use to help students succeed.
What does it cost for NH to participate in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium?	The cost of developing the Smarter Balanced assessment system is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top Assessment Program; however, it is governed and directed by states. After development is complete, most states can expect to spend less or the same on Smarter Balanced assessments than they do on current assessments. The projected per pupil cost for the summative assessment is $22.50, which is what we currently spend on NECAP – NH's current statewide assessment.

What will the assessment provide?	The assessment system will provide a fair and reliable system of next-generation assessment for English language arts and mathematics for grades 3-8 and 11 aligned to Common Core State Standards. The summative assessment will be adaptive and administered online, describing student achievement and growth of student learning as part of program evaluation and school, district and state accountability systems. It will help teachers differentiate instruction and meet the unique needs of each student.
How will the <u>NEW</u> assessment differ from the current assessment?	The assessment use of computer adaptive technology is more precise and efficient than form (paper/pencil) testing, providing results for teachers and students in a matter of weeks. It gives quick results that teachers and administrators can use to differentiate instruction better meeting the needs of their students. The new assessment will go beyond multiple-choice questions, including short constructed response, extended constructed response, and performance tasks that allow students to complete in-depth projects that demonstrate analytical skills and real-world problem solving.
What are summative assessments?	A summative assessment is designed to evaluate cumulative learning through a process of evaluating the learning of students at a given (end) point in time. Summative assessment occurs after instruction to help evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and levels of student learning.
What are interim assessments?	Performance assessments will evaluate student's knowledge and skills to a specific set of academic goals. This measurement provides multiple data over time to make informed decisions in both classroom and school levels.
Will the assessment support English language learners (ELL), students with disabilities and other special needs?	The assessment system will provide measures of achievement and growth for students with disabilities and ELLs. In September 2013, Smarter Balanced Governing States unanimously approved Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines for the assessment system, which will shape the delivery of online testing for all students, including those with visual, auditory, linguistic, or physical needs. The guidelines were developed in collaboration with member states and nationally recognized experts on English language learners and students with disabilities.
Will there be an end-of-course assessment?	There is no development of an end-of-course assessment.
What is a performance based assessment?	Performance based assessment challenges students to apply knowledge/skills to real-world problems. To measure capacities such as depth of understanding, research skills, and complex analysis that cannot be assessed with selected/constructed-response items. Performance tasks will be delivered by computer and will not be computer adaptive.
How is the higher education community involved in the new assessment?	Higher education has a goal set that colleges and universities across states will accept the assessment as evidence that high school students are ready for entry-level, credit-bearing coursework. NH has a higher education lead to provide input in the development of the assessment system.
Is the assessment for use in college admissions?	No. The assessment will not be used as admission testing for college entry examinations.
How will the performance standard be set for defining college- and career-readiness?	Higher education will play a very active role in this process. Higher education representatives have established college- and career-ready standards for the 11th grade through the CCSS. To guide the setting of performance standards the benchmarks of PISA, TIMSS, NAEP, SAT and ACT along with student performance in Grade 11 will be gleaned from state-level longitudinal data systems.
Will the assessment validate its college- and career-readiness benchmark?	A research program will validate and make adjustments to the college- and career-ready standard starting in 2014. Any necessary adjustments will be made once postsecondary performance data is available for students who have taken the assessment.

What are the Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs)?	Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) are text statements that articulate the knowledge, skills and abilities in all categories of performance on the assessment. They describe how students collectively progress toward mastery of the Common Core State Standards. This provides performance data to educators, parents and policymakers.
Are teachers involved in building the assessment system?	Yes. Engaging teachers in the design of an assessment system provides improvement in teaching and learning. Teachers help write and review assessment items for the Pilot Test for the assessment system 2013. They will also contribute to the development of items for 2014. Each state has a team of educators that were selected by the State Leadership Team for the mentioned review and test items. The following individuals are the NH State Leadership Team for the Smarter Balanced Assessment. - NH Department of Education - Commissioner - Virginia M. Barry, Ph.D. - NH Department of Education - Deputy Commissioner - Paul Leather - NH Department of Education - Chief of Staff - Heather Gage - NH Department of Education - Administrator of Accountability – Dr. Scott Mantie - NH Post-Secondary Education (Keene State University) - Melinda Treadwell
Will NH participate in the Pilot Test assessment system?	Yes. The Pilot Test of the assessment system started in late winter of 2013. It included items and performance tasks that are under development giving the assessment team inside information on how these items and tasks perform in a real-world setting. This assessment was administered to grades 3-11 at volunteer and select schools within the state.
Is the Practice Test (sample questions) available to the public for viewing?	Yes. The practice test is available at: www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/. The Pilot Test is available online for educators/students/parents and the general public to access. This can be accessed on the Smarter Balanced website at: http://www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test/. To access the Sample Items and Tasks you will have to use the following internet browsers on your desktop and laptop computers: - Firefox 3.6 or newer - Internet Explorer 8 or newer - Chrome 18 or newer - Safari 4.1 or newer To access the Sample Items on Android and iPad tablets with 9.5 inch screens (10 inch class) or larger you will have to use the following internet browsers. - Chrome 18 or newer (Android) - Safari 4.1 or newer (iPad) Also, Smarter Balanced has tested both the content of the assessment and the technology. Tests completed were the Cognitive Lab, Small Scale Trials and the Pilot Test of 5,000 schools in the Consortium. If you have any questions on access to the above internet browsers please contact Stanley Freeda at the NH Department of Education: Stanley.Freeda@doe.nh.gov
Are these all the questions/tasks done by all students whom participated in the Pilot test?	No. It is important to understand that the sample released for review by the public is a very small fraction of the over 10,000 questions and tasks in the development of the Pilot Test. This also does not include the accessibility tools and accommodation options of the test.

Is Smarter Balanced supporting the implementation of the assessment?	Yes. Smarter Balanced is committed to addressing the concerns of states and ensuring a successful transition to the new assessment. A technology readiness tool will help states plan for the transition to online assessment. A paper-and-pencil version of the assessment will be available during a three-year transition period, however, NH is encouraging all districts to use the online version. In addition, the Consortium will also provide professional development and training for teams of educators from each state.
How does computer adaptive testing (CAT) work?	The assessment system capitalizes on the precision and efficiency of Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) for both the mandatory summative assessment and the optional interim assessment. This approach represents a significant improvement over traditional paper-and-pencil assessment used in many states today. Computer adaptive testing adjusts to a student's ability by basing the difficulty of future questions on previous answers, providing more accurate measurement of student achievement, particularly for high and low-performing students.
What if my school does not have the infrastructure to support computer adaptive testing?	The commitment is to help schools transition successfully to next-generation assessment. Technology Readiness Tools (TRT) will help identify infrastructure gaps and plan for future needs in the districts and schools. The TRT will help schools in capturing/reporting key readiness indicators, such as type of computers/local network/bandwidth infrastructure and local staff resources. This will help in the overall evaluation of technology readiness for the coming transition of the assessment. Contact for Technology Assistance: Stanley Freeda at the NH Department of Education: Stanley.Freeda@doe.nh.gov
What are the technology requirements to administer the assessment?	The comprehensive technology requirements report at minimum detail bandwidth, hardware and operating system specifications for devices to administer the assessment.
How is the assessment going to improve teaching and learning?	The assessment will be administered online and will go beyond multiple choice questions to include performance tasks that allow students to demonstrate research, writing, and analytical skills. Accommodations for students with disabilities/English language learners will be part of the system that show progress of student(s) and can be accurately measured. A reporting system will provide easy-to-understand data on growth and achievement. The reports will present students, parents, teachers, principals and others with information that can use to help students make greater progress.
What is the overall value of the assessment test?	Better and more reliable information to be used by educators in letting them know who are in need of additional support and those that are excelling. It is more efficient with the use of computerized testing taking less time from time of receiving materials for testing to the finish of packing and returning the test and the results are returned back to the school, student and educator faster to evaluate achievement and goal setting.
Is the assessment replacing the need for SAT and ACT?	No. The assessment will not replace SAT or ACT.
Will universities and colleges know how to interpret the data from the assessment?	The answer is yes. A policy framework was developed by the Higher Ed and K-12 leaders guiding universities and colleges on the "how's" of interpreting student performance. This will be redefined when student performance data has been collected/analyzed.

What happens after Smarter Balanced assessments in 2014?	Governing states accepted recommendations from the Sustainability Task Force to include a scope of services/plans to engage the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) at UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. This will provide research support and a full array of administrative services after the conclusion of the federal grant in 2014. Ongoing development with continuous improvement will be integrated in overall sustainable efforts by the governed member states.
Are there multiple measures of content readiness?	It is recognized that there are limits to relying on a single test for making high-stakes decisions. Therefore, use of multiple measures to determine student course placement is supported. While K-12 is focusing on the assessment, higher education may establish policies regarding rigorous alternate means for students in demonstration of readiness on credit bearing courses.
Will the data collected on students be intrusive/inappropriate?	No. New Hampshire will make policies on collection, storage and the use of student data according to NH privacy law. Smarter Balanced must adhere to all State and Federal laws pertaining to the collection and storage of such data like that of the current NECAP and NAEP testing. The following websites are useful in understanding federal and state law on privacy: • Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html • No Child Left Behind (NCLB): http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.html • Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ129 • Education Reform Sciences Act of 2002: http://www.ed.gov/p-12-reform • Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html • New Hampshire Department of Education Law: http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/XV/193-C/193-C-11.htm,
Do the assessments result in standardization of teaching and learning?	No, absolutely not. Smarter Balanced makes sure that teachers and students have high quality data, tools and resources to support improvement. The assessment is not only an end-of-year test. The assessment system will provide flexibility of non-secured test items that teachers can use throughout the year at their discretion. These are instructional improvement tools, but they do not tell teachers how to teach.
What about the transparency of the assessment testing?	The goal is for the assessment to be completely transparent. All documents describing content specification, item specification, writing training materials, test blueprints, accommodations, frameworks, achievement descriptors and technology are available to the public.
Are there any concerns about test security? (cheating or tampering)	The summative assessment design allows states to administer different tests during the twelve week testing period each academic year. Computer adaptive assessments for students are based and customized on their performance during test taking. Each question is uniquely different. The results are captured electronically so the possibility for it to be tampered with cannot happen once the administration is complete.
Are there taped webinars/webex that can be viewed?	Yes. Please visit: www.smarterbalanced.org/resources-events/webinars to find YouTube or SchoolTube webinars.

How many states are in the Smarter Balanced Consortium and who are they?	There are 21 Governing States of Smarter Balanced with 3 Advisory States and 1 Affiliated State.

Governing States are: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Member States are: Alaska, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Wyoming

Affiliated State is: US Virgin Islands |
Is there a specific time during the school year for assessment?	Yes. The summative assessment will be given at the school's year end.
Does a longitudinal academic growth model relate to assessment work?	Reporting student growth is a priority to Smarter Balanced. The growth measure will describe relative growth and that of growth expected giving prior achievements, and comparing growth to their peers to which students are on track to college and career readiness.
Will Smarter Balanced be implemented in all schools through the nation by federal mandate?	No. Only states that are part of the Consortia under a signed MOU will participate in the assessment.
Will the assessment include scaled scores and performance scores like that of NECAP?	Yes. At this time, scaled scores to assess year to year data and performance scores, "Proficient with Distinction/Proficient/Partially Proficient/Substantially Below Proficient," will continue as they currently do with NECAP.
Does the assessment system require a shared or common curriculum?	No. New Hampshire believes that these decisions are best left to the educators at local and state levels.
How do I get continued information updates on Smarter Balanced Assessment?	The following link will direct you to the Smarter Balanced website for current and updated information: http://www.smarterbalanced.org