

A Family Guide

to Understanding California's New Testing System: Part 2 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress

This spring students in grades 3-8 and 11 will take online tests in English-language arts and mathematics using a computer. These tests are known as the Smarter Balanced Assessments, and they are part of California's new testing system called the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). This is Part 2 of the **Family Guide to Understanding California's New Testing System**, and it focuses on what your child will experience when he or she sits down to take these tests. Part 1 of the **Family Guide** provides an overview of the new testing system and, along with other resources, can be found on the Sacramento County Office of Education's Web site at www.scoe.net/statetests

For More Information

Your child's teacher or principal is the best place to start if you have other questions about testing this spring.

Additional questions and answers about the CAASPP system can be found on the California Department of Education's Web site at www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/sbcommonqa.asp. Parents can also find other information on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Web site at www.smarterbalanced.org.

This Guide was developed by the Center for Student Assessment and Program Accountability at the Sacramento County Office of Education for use by schools and school districts in communicating with their families about state testing in spring 2015.

Tests Measure Real-World Skills

As the world and workforce evolve, what and how we teach our children must also evolve so they are prepared to live and work in an ever-changing world. Over the course of their lives, our children will have to apply what they know in new and different ways, including ways we can't even imagine today. Critical thinking and problem solving skills are important for students as they prepare for success in college, career, and life. These skills can't be measured by multiple-choice questions alone or paper and pencil tests. This is why the new Smarter Balanced tests were developed.

Questions Look Different

The new online tests give students many different types of test questions that keep them engaged and challenged. Students who participated in last year's field test (i.e., "test of the test") said they liked the computer testing much better than the paper and pencil testing. Students found the questions more interesting, and as a result, they stayed more engaged with the test.

Some questions are multiple choice, but others include several steps. Some questions might ask students to drag and drop items from one part of the screen to another part in order to solve a problem (see sample question below), and some might ask students to draw a graph.

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Jared is testing how much weight a bag can hold. He plans to put juice bottles into three bags. He wants each bag to have a total weight within the given range.

- Drag juice bottles into each bag so that the weight is within the given range.
- Leave the bag empty if the given range is not possible using juice bottles.

Click and Drag animation

3 $\frac{3}{8}$ lb

Between 6 lb and 7 lb Between 10 lb and 11 lb Between 14 lb and 15 lb

One of the most important changes is that these new questions are evaluating a student's knowledge in context – for example, a student might be asked to select a word of the same meaning to replace a word in a paragraph, rather than choose a synonym for a word standing alone. In another example, students might be asked to highlight a sentence in a passage that supports the meaning of a word rather than selecting the definition of the word from multiple options. In many cases, even in mathematics, a student will be asked to type answers to questions rather than selecting from multiple options.

Each Test Has Two Separate Parts

The test for both English-language arts and mathematics is divided into two parts: (1) Computer-Adaptive Test or CAT and (2) Performance Task.

• Computer-Adaptive Tests Adjust to Each Student's Ability

“Computer-adaptive” tests adjust the difficulty of the questions based on the answers that students give, thus providing a different testing experience for each student. As students answer questions correctly, they receive more difficult questions. Incorrect answers trigger easier questions. This will be a different testing experience for many students, and it is something parents should keep in mind as one thing they can talk to their children about before testing.

Computer-adaptive testing (CAT) produces results that are more accurate than the old paper and pencil tests, and CAT also keeps students more engaged throughout the test. Depending on your child's grade, he or she will receive between 40 and 45 questions in English-language arts and between 30 and 35 questions in math.¹

• Performance Tasks Measure Deeper Understanding

The performance task is the second part of the test, and it is a collection of activities and questions related to a real-world situation that requires students to use multiple skills to show their understanding. Students are provided with articles, portions of text, videos, or diagrams, and then are asked to analyze them in order to solve a problem. To help students prepare for the performance tasks, teachers will lead students through a classroom activity before testing to help introduce students to new vocabulary and the context for the task.

A performance task for English-language arts, for example, might ask students to read several grade-level appropriate paragraphs from different sources (e.g., newspaper article, Web site, or book) about the same topic. Students would then be asked questions about the different sources, such as which source would be the most helpful in learning about the topic, and what details from the source support their conclusions. To measure deeper understanding of math skills,

students might be presented with a real-world problem like planting a community garden (as shown in the graphic above).

The performance task will also be done on a computer, but it isn't computer-adaptive. This means that all students in the same grade at the same school will take the same performance task. The performance task will take between one to two class periods to complete.

Tests Are Not Timed - Estimated Times Similar to Old Tests

The new tests are not timed. The table below shows the estimated total testing time for each subject area. The total testing time for each subject includes time for both the computer-adaptive test and the performance task. In most cases, your child will take the entire test over several days.

Grade Level	English Language Arts	Mathematics
Grades 3-5	4 hours	3 hours
Grades 6-8	4 hours	3 hours, 30 minutes
Grade 11	4 hours, 30 minutes	4 hours

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Your class is going to plant vegetables in a section of the local community garden. The garden manager has provided an area to plant the vegetables as follows:

The total area for the class to plant vegetables will be a rectangle 40 feet long and 30 feet wide.

The class has decided to plant four rectangular sections of the class garden with vegetables according to this plan:

- 1/4 of the garden will be planted with carrots.
- 1/6 of the garden will be planted with potatoes.
- 1/8 of the garden will be planted with broccoli.
- 1/12 of the garden will be planted with corn.

In this task, you will analyze the class plan and determine an alternate plan that will help make the most use of the available area.

Using the connect line tool, draw rectangles on this model of the garden to represent the four rectangular sections for planting vegetables according to the class plan. The garden model is divided into 5 feet by 5 feet sections.

- Use whole number side lengths.
- Each square on the model represents 1 square foot.
- Drag the correct label that shows the vegetable for each section.

Carrots, Potatoes, Broccoli, Corn

“Analyze the class plan and determine an alternative that will help make the most of the available area”

- Drawn from real life
- Requires multiple steps
- No one right answer

¹ Smarter Balanced Assessment Test Blueprints – see www.smarterbalanced.org for more information.