



PARENTS' GUIDE TO SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENTS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

In 2015, New Hampshire rolled out new statewide assessments aligned to the New Hampshire College and Career Ready Standards. The assessments, developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), measure the knowledge and skills found in the adopted New Hampshire standards for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics. The Smarter Balanced Assessments replaced the state's **NECAP** assessment in ELA and mathematics.

WHY ASSESS?

Assessment results provide information that can inform teachers how to improve, modify or enhance instruction for a whole class, for groups of students and/or for individual students. Assessments also provide students with feedback regarding their own learning.

The new Smarter Balanced Assessments are one indicator of student performance in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. Combined with other data from classroom teachers, such as feedback on homework and quizzes and other interim or benchmark assessments, results provide important information about academic performance.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THE NEW ASSESSMENTS?

The rich Smarter Balanced Assessment data is a valuable resource for educators as they work together to prepare students for the demands of college and the 21st century workforce.

By measuring student progress in English language arts/literacy and mathematics, the assessments provide actionable information that can be used to help ensure student needs are addressed.

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

The consortium is a group of states, including New Hampshire, that worked together to develop high-quality assessments in English language arts/literacy and mathematics that are aligned to the state standards.

WHAT WILL STUDENTS DO ON THE MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT?

Students will:

- Explain and use mathematics to solve problems.
- Complete math problems quickly and accurately.
- Understand how math concepts link together.
- Apply their mathematical knowledge to solve real-world problems.
- Communicate their mathematical reasoning.

THIS GUIDE INCLUDES:

- Overview of the Smarter Balanced Assessments
- Sample questions
- Overview of accountability for students, teachers and schools
- Additional resources for parents

What will students do on the English language arts/ literacy assessment?

Students will:

- Show they can read and understand a variety of complex, grade-appropriate informational and literary texts.
- Use evidence from source materials to support their ideas in written responses at every grade level.
- Interpret and use information delivered orally to determine main ideas, summarize or analyze.
- Research a topic and use the findings to take a position and defend it, or to evaluate information.

Benefits of the Smarter Balanced Assessments:

The computer-adaptive design of the Smarter Balanced Assessments allows the system to adjust the difficulty of questions based on student responses. A student who answers correctly will receive a more challenging item, while a student who provides an incorrect answer will generate an easier question. This method provides students with a more engaging test experience, is more time-efficient and produces more accurate results than traditional methods.

The computer-adaptive assessment also includes built-in universal tools for students to access while they are taking the assessment. For example, students can use a highlighting tool to assist them in determining their answers. Designated supports are accessible to any student with predetermined needs and specific accommodations are available for students with an IEP or 504 plan.

NOTE: The Smarter Balanced Assessments were designed to work on a wide range of operating systems, including those with minimal processors and limited memory. Paper-and-pencil versions of the assessment are still available and in use by a small number of schools/districts in New Hampshire.

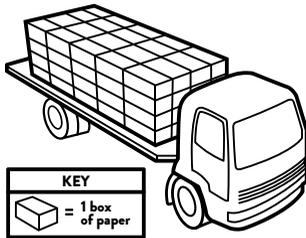


Sample Questions

The following questions are representative of those found on the new assessments. For more examples visit: smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks

FIFTH-GRADE MATHEMATICS

The bed of a truck is stacked with boxes of paper. The boxes are stacked 5 boxes deep by 4 boxes high by 4 boxes across, as shown in the picture.



- When the driver is in the **empty** truck, the mass is 2948.35 kilograms.
- The mass of 1 box of paper is 22.5 kilograms.
- The driver delivers some of the boxes of paper at his first stop.
- The truck has to drive over a bridge on the way to the next stop.
- Trucks with a mass greater than 4700 kilograms are **not** allowed to drive over the bridge.

Enter the **minimum** number of boxes of paper the driver must deliver at the first stop to be allowed to drive over the bridge.

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SIXTH-GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

A student is writing a report about sleep. Read both sources and the directions that follow.

Source 1: "During Sleep" by Dr. Howard Dell

If you are like some people, you may think that sleep is a process during which the body and brain shut off, but this is not the case. The body goes through a series of stages during sleep in which body and brain activity change. Most of these changes are not noticed nor remembered. However, sleep does usually follow a pattern. Muscle activity and breathing slow in the initial stages of sleep. The body's temperature also decreases. Sometimes during sleep, the heart can begin to beat more quickly, blood pressure can rise, and many muscles experience small movements. These changes often happen during dreams.

Source 2: What Happens While You Sleep

SLEEP STAGE	DESCRIPTION
Stage 1 Light Sleep	The muscles relax, eye movement slows and thoughts begin to fade. A person may be easily awakened.
Stage 2 Light Sleep	Eye movement stops, and a person can experience brief dreams. Body temperature begins dropping and heart rate slows.
Stage 3 Moderate-Deep Sleep	The body temperature lowers, and a person is difficult to awaken.
Stage 4 Deep Sleep	The brain uses less energy. The body temperature lowers more than in moderate-deep sleep. A person may sleepwalk.
REM Sleep (REM = rapid eye movement)	Most dreams occur during this stage. The brain uses energy as eyes move quickly, even though the eyelids are closed. Heart rate and blood pressure increase, but many of the large body muscles are inactive.

The student took notes about information in the sources. Select **two** notes that correctly paraphrase, or restate, information from **both** sources.

- We dream several times each night.
- People can be easily awakened from sleep.
- We do not remember what happens during sleep.
- People can sleepwalk during a stage of deep sleep.
- Our bodies and brains continue to work during sleep.
- During some stages of sleep, our bodies decrease in activity.



What Parents Can Expect



How long will the assessments take?

- Smarter Balanced Assessments are untimed. Students can take as much time as they need to finish. This allows students to think critically, explore, read carefully and write a well-thought-out response.
- Total estimated testing time ranges from 6 to 7 1/2 hours, and is spread out over multiple testing periods and several weeks.

When do students take the Smarter Balanced Assessments?

- Assessments take place during the last 12 weeks of the school year.
- Exact testing dates are available through individual schools/districts.

How long will the assessments take?

- Assessment results allow parents, teachers and students to know whether students are on track each year.
- Results provide an annual snapshot of student achievement that should be used along with other information, such as class work and other assessments, when making educational decisions.
- Although an important measure, results are not the sole measure of student achievement, program evaluation, or school, district, and state accountability systems.

Is there an accountability system for schools in N.H.?

In June 2009, the N.H. State Legislature passed Senate Bill 180, now **RSA 193-E**, that “establishes an accountability system to ensure schools are providing the opportunity for an adequate education.”

The legislation defines the two components of the accountability system: an input-based system and a performance-based system. Information on the N.H. Accountability System can be found at:

education.nh.gov/instruction/school_improve/documents/overview.pdf

Preparing and Supporting Your Child

- Review the testing calendar and work with your local school to ensure there will be regular and clear communications about the assessments and how the results are used.
- Discuss the new tests with your child. Make sure he or she feels comfortable and understands the importance of taking the test.
- With older children, explain that the assessments were created to make sure they are on track to be ready for the demands of college and the 21st century workplace, and to identify any issues early enough to give them more support.
- Review assessment results with your child and his or her teacher.
- Make sure your child has a comfortable place for studying and is prepared mentally and physically for a test.

Staying informed and involved:

- Become familiar with New Hampshire's standards by visiting: education.nh.gov/instruction/curriculum/index.htm
- Review sample assessment questions by visiting: smarterbalanced.org/practice-test
- Read all comments written by the teacher. Ask teachers to explain anything that is unclear and discuss how you can best work together to address areas of improvement for your child.
- Monitor your child's progress and regularly communicate with your child's teachers. If your child needs extra help or wants to learn more about a subject, work with his or her teacher to identify opportunities for tutoring, after-school clubs or other resources.
- Remember that tests are not perfect measures of what a child can do—there are many other factors that might influence a test score. For example, a child can be affected by the way he or she is feeling on test day, or the particular classroom setting.
- Meet with your child's teacher as often as possible to discuss his or her progress. Ask for activities to do at home to help prepare for tests and improve your child's proficiency.

Additional Resources

- For more information on the Smarter Balanced Consortium, of which New Hampshire is a member, visit: smarterbalanced.org



National PTA Call to Take Action

Parents are their child's best advocates. As a parent and your child's first teacher, you should be informed of the assessment and accountability system that is in place in your child's school. Parents and families must be at the table with school leaders and school districts to ensure that testing is implemented well, and with enough resources to ensure success.

New Hampshire should include parents and teachers in thoughtful conversations based on trust, collaboration and respect. For additional details about the assessment and accountability system, please call the New Hampshire Department of Education, (603) 271-3494.

Here are some questions you might want to ask:

- How many assessments will my child take this school year, and where can I access/view the assessment calendar?
- What will happen if my child does not meet proficiency levels on the new assessments?
- How will the results of tests be used to support my child's learning?
- What can I do, as a parent, to help my child do his or her best?
- How will school evaluations be affected based on results of the new assessments?

Also, be sure to speak with your local school administrators! Ask them to host a parent night in the spring to explain the tests and in the fall to explain test results.

Below is the list of policies and practices that National PTA supports. Check with the New Hampshire Department of Education to determine if the state's policies and practices are aligned.

- National PTA believes that valid assessment does not consist of only a single test score, and that at no time should a single test be considered the sole determinant of a student's academic or work future.
- National PTA supports nationally agreed-upon voluntary standards if they are derived by consensus at the state and local levels. Parents must be involved in this process.
- National PTA believes that assessments provide valuable information to parents, teachers and school leaders about the growth and achievement of their students. Furthermore, having annual data on the performance of students can help inform teaching and learning, as well as identify achievement gaps among groups of students within a school and among school districts. National PTA believes assessments are essential to ensure that all students receive a high-quality education.