

# A Guide to Common Core and Smarter Balanced



## 1. What is the Common Core?

In order to be successful in college and the workforce, graduates of Connecticut high schools need to demonstrate new skills for a new era. They must develop critical thinking, problem solving, and analytical skills.

The Common Core Standards set grade-level goals that seek to help students to meet these goals. We want our students to become active, informed, and successful members of society.

## 2. What are the origins of the Common Core?

In 2009, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers began working with teachers, researchers, and content experts from across the country to establish standard expectations for what students should know and be able to do. These "standards" set goals for mastery of skills by grade level in Math and English/Language Arts. Once the standards were drafted, individual states could choose to adopt them. Connecticut adopted them in 2010, and we have been working hard to implement them ever since.

## 3. What is the Smarter Balanced Assessment?

The Smarter Balanced Assessment is a new statewide test in Math and English/Language Arts that replaced the Connecticut Mastery Test. The new test aligns with Connecticut's new Common Core State Standards, and it measures our students' progress in meeting these higher goals.

## 4. How will data from the Smarter Balanced Assessment be used?

Assessment information about student performance allows:

- **Teachers** to target instruction to individual student needs;
- **Students** to better monitor their own efforts;
- **School Leaders** to make decisions about curriculum and professional development; and
- **Parents** to understand their child's progress towards college- and career-readiness.

## 5. What are the components of the test?

Overall scores are reported in a scale-score range, using four performance levels in both English/Language Arts and Mathematics.

- Level 1 — Does not meet standards
- Level 2 — Approaching standards
- Level 3 — Meets standards
- Level 4 — Exceeds standards

Students who score within the Level 3 or Level 4 are meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations.

## 6. What specific skills are tested in English/Language Arts and Mathematics?

### English/Language Arts/Literacy:

- Reading
- Writing
- Listening
- Research/  
Inquiry

### Mathematics:

- Concepts and Procedures
- Problem Solving and Modeling & Data Analysis
- Communicating Reasoning

## 7. What should parents expect for the future?

This year's test results are just a baseline that will help us to understand students' strengths and weaknesses against grade-level expectations. For your student, expect to see results improve going forward. If your student is not yet meeting grade-level expectations, you should ask your student's teacher how he plans to help your student progress and how you can supplement that work at home.

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