

California Department of Education

Executive Office

SBE-003 (REV. 11/2017)

imab-adad-sep24item03

# California State Board of Education September 2024 Agenda Item #02

## Subject

Understanding the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics Results.

## Type of Action

Information

## Summary of the Issue(s)

This item provides an overview of a new communications document developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium to support a better understanding of student assessment results in relation to grade-level achievement.

## Recommendation

This item is information only. No specific action is recommended at this time.

## Brief History of Key Issues

The Smarter Balanced assessments were developed through the collaboration of 12 states and a U.S. territory, with the objective of comprehensively measuring the Common Core standards. The Smarter Balanced assessments cover the full range of the grade-level English language Arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics standards by integrating diverse item types and performance tasks. The Smarter Balanced computer-adaptive test design provides more precision than many other standardized assessments by selecting items that match each student’s performance. This method provides a more precise test score while reducing testing time for students. In addition, the use of performance tasks in the Smarter Balanced assessments allows students to apply their higher-order thinking skills to analyze and explore solutions to real-world problems.

### Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments: What Do the Scores Mean?

The Smarter Balanced assessments are more comprehensive than many other state and national tests and are scored on a continuum of success that reflects students’ increasing accuracy and complexity of knowledge and skills. For example, the ELA assessment not only measures reading, but also writing, listening, and research. The mathematics assessment measures each student’s ability to engage in the operations of mathematics as well as how well they can use mathematics to analyze, solve problems, and communicate their reasoning. The Smarter Balanced assessments stand apart from many other assessments in their ability to measure student performance in both foundational and higher-order skills at each grade level.

Student test results for overall performance are categorized into four achievement levels that describe the relative accuracy and complexity of students’ performance within their grade level. The four achievement levels are Level 4 (Standard Exceeded), Level 3 (Standard Met), Level 2 (Standard Nearly Met), and Level 1 (Standard Not Met).

Each of the four achievement levels above may be interpreted as follows:

* Level 4: Students consistently demonstrate advanced grade-level knowledge and skills with deep understanding and a full range of complexity.
* Level 3: Students consistently demonstrate proficient grade-level knowledge and skills with a broad range of complexity.
* Level 2: Students demonstrate foundational grade-level knowledge and skills with a limited range of complexity.
* Level 1: Students do not consistently demonstrate grade-level knowledge and skills.

Levels 2–4 represent grade-level performance at differing degrees of complexity and Level 1 represents inconsistent or tenuous grade-level performance.

Students who achieve a Level 2 (“Standard Nearly Met”) on the Smarter Balanced assessment must correctly answer grade-level content to achieve that category (as compared to a category of Level 1). The Smarter Balanced assessments measure critical thinking skills (e.g., analysis, synthesis, and problem-solving), and students who achieve a Level 2 demonstrate some success in the types of skills that educators, students, families, and the business community value most highly.

Providing greater information regarding the interpretation of the performance levels is important to prevent any misinterpretation of assessment results and student performance. For example, students who score at Level 2 are often reported to have no grade-level knowledge. In fact, students scoring at a Level 2 demonstrate foundational grade-level achievement. To further support better understanding of student performance on Smarter Balanced assessments, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium recently released a one-page brief titled “Smarter Balanced Assessments: What Do the Scores Mean?” This brief is included in Attachment 1.

In addition to an overall scale score and achievement level, students also receive scores for specific areas on each test, such as Reading and Listening for ELA, and Concepts and Procedures for mathematics. This degree of results reporting provides students, families, and educators with the information necessary to understand student achievement and progress while meeting the requirements of federal law.

Educators can use the results as one additional piece of information to help identify patterns of performance among their students and prioritize system-wide changes. Families and students can use results to support conversations with students’ teachers about whether and where their students may benefit from additional support.

More information about the Smarter Balanced assessments and results can be found on the Test Results for California’s Assessments website at <https://caaspp-elpac.ets.org/caaspp/>.

## Summary of Previous State Board of Education Discussion and Action

In July 2024, The California Department of Education notified the State Board of Education (SBE) that 2023–24 results were available to local educational agencies for local use (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr24/documents/jul24item04.docx>).

In September 2023, the SBE approved revisions to the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress and English Language Proficiency Assessments for California Student Score Reports for the 2023–24 administration (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr23/documents/sep23item03.docx>).

In November 2014, the SBE approved the State Superintendent of Public Instruction’s recommendations for the full implementation of a technology-enabled assessment system and the administration of the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments in 2014–15 (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr14/documents/nov14item03.doc>).

## Fiscal Analysis (as appropriate)

Not applicable.

## Attachment(s)

* Smarter Balanced Assessments: What Do the Scores Mean? (1 page)