

Connecticut Common Core Standards: Facts

It is critical to the success of every child to dispel any myths regarding Common Core and Smarter Balanced. We have collated some facts for use by board of education members, superintendents, public information officers, and other stakeholders to help clear the air of fiction before it takes hold.

- ✓ Fact: The federal government did not develop the Common Core State Standards. The desire to develop higher, shared standards was expressed by states early in 2007 at the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) Annual Policy Forum. State education chiefs and governors, through their membership in CCSSO and the National Governors Association (NGA), led the development of the Common Core State Standards. This timeline and background document outlines the process for the development of the Common Core.
- ✓ Fact: For decades Congress has required assessments of student learning for accountability under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, known as the “No Child Left Behind Act” enacted during the Bush Administration, expanded those federal testing requirements to include state testing of every student in language arts and mathematics in grades three through eight and once in high school. In 2010, the federal government funded the State of Washington to act on behalf of a consortium of states to develop new, next-generation assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. While federal funding currently supports the research and development work of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, all policy decisions about the structure and content of the assessments are made by the member states based on input from stakeholders across the country. At the conclusion of the federal grant in September 2014, Smarter Balanced will become an operational assessment system supported by its member states. States will make all policy decisions with regard to the collection, storage, and use of student assessment data. Smarter Balanced will adhere to all federal and state privacy laws.
- ✓ Fact: The standards do not limit reading to non-fiction, but suggest a balance between perspectives. Recognizing that teachers, school districts, and states should decide on appropriate curriculum, the standards do not offer required reading lists. They establish what students need to learn, but do not tell teachers how to teach so they can tailor instruction, allowing for continued flexibility and creativity. Related resources: [“The Role of Fiction in the High School Language Arts Classroom”](#) by Susan Pimentel and David Coleman and [“The Common Core Ate my Baby and Other Urban Legends”](#) by Timothy Shanahan.

- ✓ Fact: A founding principle of Smarter Balanced is that teachers and students need high-quality data, tools, and resources to support improvements in student learning. Smarter Balanced isn't just an end-of-year accountability test. It is an assessment system that features flexible, non-secure interim assessments to be offered at teachers' and schools' discretion throughout the school year and a digital library of formative assessment tools, practices, and professional development resources built by teachers, for teachers to improve the quality of information collected through the daily classroom activities of assignments, quizzes, and observation of student work. The end-of-year tests will help schools evaluate how well their students performed by comparing their aggregate data with aggregate data from other schools across the nation. The end-of-year assessments also will empower students and parents by providing them with a clear indication of how well their children are progressing toward mastering the academic knowledge and skills necessary for college and career readiness.

- ✓ Fact: Smarter Balanced aims for complete transparency. All of the key documents describing the assessment (content specifications, item specifications, item writing training materials, test blueprints, accommodations framework, achievement level descriptors, technology specifications, etc.) are available to the public on the Smarter Balanced website (www.SmarterBalanced.org).

- ✓ Fact: Smarter Balanced has incrementally tested the content of the assessment and the technology that will support the assessment. Smarter Balanced has already completed:
 - *Cognitive Labs:* Individual students provided feedback to test developers about their experience with the innovative test questions, accommodations for students with special needs, and the testing software.
 - *Small-Scale Trials:* Promising types of questions and software features were further tried out with hundreds of students.
 - *Pilot Test:* Students at about 5,000 schools across the Consortium responded to a preliminary pool of test questions and performance tasks.

- ✓ Fact: The Smarter Balanced assessment is being designed to work with the computing resources in schools today. The assessments can be offered on very old operating systems and require only the minimum processors and memory required to run the operating system itself (for example, the summative assessment can be delivered using computers with 233 MHz processors and 128 MB RAM that run Windows XP). Likewise, the file size for individual assessment items will be very small to minimize the network bandwidth necessary to deliver the assessment online. For example, a 600-student middle school could test its students using only one 30-computer lab.