



Defining Components of the Delaware Balanced Assessment System

Delaware is transitioning to a new assessment system (Smarter Assessments) for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics during the 2014–2015 school year. This assessment system will provide parents, students, educators, community members, and policymakers accurate information about whether students are on track to graduate high school ready for college and the workplace. Delaware partnered with states across the nation to develop this new balanced assessment system, which provides educators with multiple resources to assess student progress:

Summative Assessment

End-of-the-year college and career readiness assessments provide a clear understanding of how well students are prepared. These assessments include a computer adaptive test (CAT) that adjusts the difficulty of questions throughout the assessment. For example, a student who answers a question correctly will receive a more challenging item, while an incorrect answer generates an easier question. By adapting to the student as the assessment is taking place, these assessments present an individually tailored set of questions to each student and can quickly identify which skills students have mastered. The assessments also include a performance task section that measures deeper learning with scenario-based tasks. These real-world applications of knowledge combine with the CAT to generate an overall score.

Interim Assessment

These assessments can be used throughout the year by educators to see how students are progressing. Teachers can match assessments with the scope and sequence of their lessons and review student responses to inform future/subsequent instruction. These are optional assessments selected for use at the local level.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment provides educators with “on-the-spot” information of student progress during instruction so that instruction can be adapted to meet the needs of each student. Educators have access to a digital library of tools and materials for classroom instruction. These resources are embedded with formative assessments to enable teachers to monitor the progress of their students throughout instruction.

A balanced assessment system—which includes the formative assessment process as well as interim and summative assessments—provides tools to improve teaching and learning. These state-level balanced assessment components, when coupled with purposeful, effective, locally developed and/or selected assessments, such as benchmark assessments, help round out an effective and efficient assessment system supporting student growth toward college and the workplace.