



Enhancing Assessments to Support Teaching and Learning

# **Next Generation Assessment Systems Proposed Under the Race to the Top Program**

Prepared by the

Center for K – 12 Assessment  
& Performance Management

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The Race to the Top (RTTT) Assessment Program will provide \$350 million in competitive grants to support the development of a new generation of multi-state assessment systems. Unlike most existing state assessment systems, however, the vision expressed within the RTTT program features an integrated set of formative assessments for use by teachers within the flow of instruction, interim assessments to be given as progress checks throughout the year, and more focused summative accountability assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The Assessment Program application calls for the development of new systems that will:

- Go beyond the current measurement of status/proficiency and measure individual student growth, for all students across the achievement spectrum;
- Measure the extent to which each student is on track, at each grade level tested, toward college- or career-readiness by the time of high school completion;
- Provide information that is useful in informing:
  - o Teaching, learning, and program improvement;
  - o Determinations of school effectiveness;
  - o Determinations of principal and teacher effectiveness for use in evaluations and the provision of support to teachers and principals; and
  - o Determinations of individual student college- and career-readiness, such as determinations made for high school exit decisions, college course placement in credit-bearing classes, or college entrance.

The Assessment Program invited applications by Consortia of states for a) Comprehensive Assessment Systems for grades three – eight and at least one grade in high school, and b) High School Course Assessment Programs. Applications were due by June 23, and two applications were submitted for the Comprehensive Assessment System grants:

- The Partnership for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), and
- The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC).

Awards will be handed out by the U.S. Department of Education by the end of September 2010. The new system(s) must be operational by the 2014 – 15 school year. The Center for K – 12 Assessment & Performance Management developed the following summaries as high-level descriptions of the proposed systems. The illustrations and descriptions on pages 2 and 3 have been reviewed and approved by leaders of each Consortium. It is important to note, however, that these designs may be modified during the federal review process and later during the assessment development process.

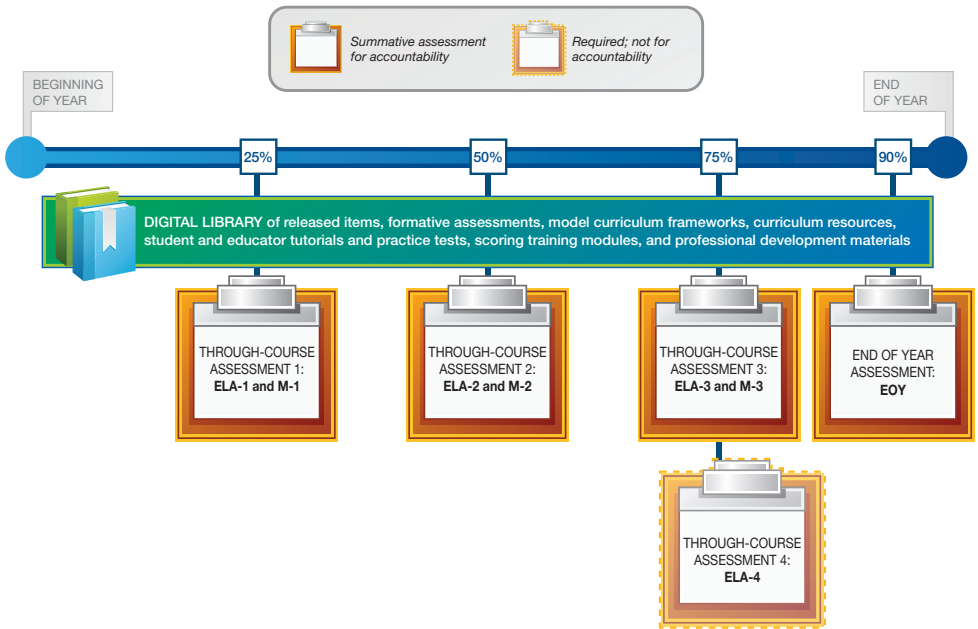
The purpose of this handout is to describe two of the proposals submitted to the U.S. Department of Education for the development of new multi-state assessment systems for grades three – eight and high school grades. The descriptions on pages 2 and 3 have been prepared by the Center for K – 12 Assessment & Performance Management and approved by Consortia representatives. For more detailed descriptions, we urge readers to refer to the full proposals at:

[www.fldoe.org/parcc](http://www.fldoe.org/parcc)

[www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER](http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER)

# The Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)

## English Language Arts and Mathematics: Grades 3 – 11



### Description of assessment system components:

#### Through-Course Assessments — to be used for accountability pending validation studies:

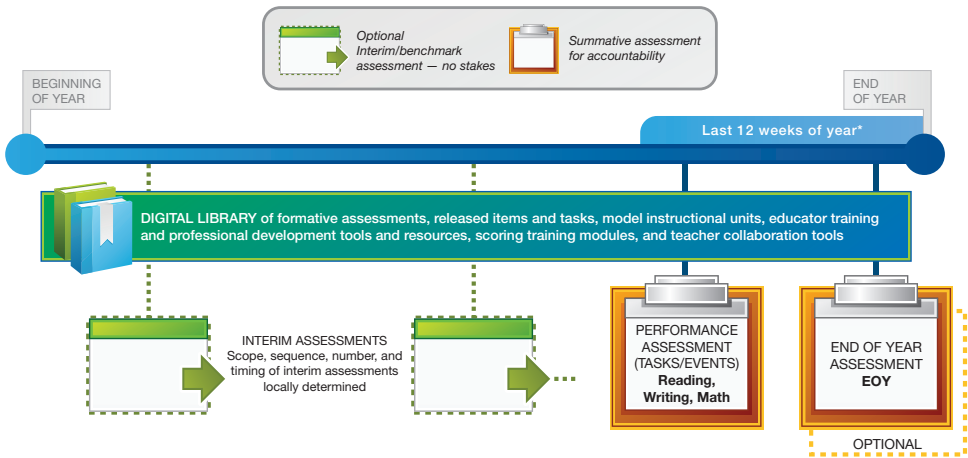
- **ELA-1 and ELA-2:** In a single session/class period, students will complete 1 or 2 tasks involving reading texts, drawing conclusions, and presenting analysis in writing.
- **ELA-3:** Over several sessions/class periods, students will locate and evaluate information from within a set of digital resources, evaluate their quality, select sources, and compose an essay or research paper.
- **ELA-4 (speaking and listening):** Students will present their work from ELA-3 to classmates and respond to questions. Teachers will score, using a standardized rubric, and use results in determining students' class grades.
- **M-1 and M-2:** In a single session/class period, students will complete 1 to 3 tasks that assess 1 or 2 essential topics (standards or clusters of standards).
- **M-3:** Students will perform multi-step performance task(s) that require conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and application of mathematical tools and reasoning, sometimes in unfamiliar contexts.

#### End-of-Year Comprehensive Assessment:

- **EOY:** Students will take this assessment on the computer, and it will be rapidly scored. The test will be composed of 40 to 65 questions with a range of item types, including innovative items.

# The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)

English Language Arts and Mathematics: Grades 3 – 8 and High School



## Description of assessment system components:

- **Interim/benchmark assessments:** These optional computer adaptive assessments will provide near-immediate results on the same scale as the summative assessment. The item types will mirror the summative comprehensive assessment, but assess a smaller set of standards at a deeper level to provide more actionable diagnostic feedback. Reports will link teachers to appropriate formative strategies and professional development resources.
- **Performance tasks/events:** Students will complete 1 task in reading, 1 in writing, and 2 in mathematics annually, during a Consortium-defined testing window within the last 12 weeks of the school year.\* Each task/event will require 1 to 2 class periods and will involve student-initiated planning, management of information and ideas, interaction with other materials and/or people, and production of an extended response such as an oral presentation, exhibit, product development, or an extended written piece. A combination of machine and teacher scoring will be used, with results returned within 2 weeks.\*
- **EOY comprehensive assessment:** The EOY assessment will include approximately 40 to 65 questions per content area and will be presented to students using a computer adaptive assessment taken during the last 12 weeks\* of the school year. It will include selected response, constructed response, and technology-enhanced items. A combination of immediate scoring by computer and teacher scoring using a distributed, moderated online scoring system will be used, and results will be returned within 2 weeks.\* The system will support an additional opportunity for students, as locally determined.
- All of the above assessments will provide students with information regarding their achievement, growth, and progress toward college- and career-readiness.

\*Time windows may be adjusted based on results from the research agenda and final implementation decisions.

## Noteworthy New Features

**Online Testing:** Both of these Consortia are committed to moving quickly to the use of online testing. The advantages pointed out by the Consortia include:

- Reduced cost;
- Faster turnaround of scores to teachers, students, and parents;
- The option to utilize adaptive test delivery, which yields more precise scores for high- and low-achieving students;
- The ability to assess college- and career-readiness skills that involve the use of technologies, such as spreadsheets, and to assess skills and problem-solving processes that cannot be assessed on paper through items such as multi-step simulations; and
- A greater range of accommodations for students with disabilities.

Also, each proposal presses for rapid advances in the technologies for test items and electronic scoring of items. The Common Core State Standards contain some expectations that are difficult, if not impossible, to assess via traditional item types. The proposals call for aggressive research and development in the area of interactive assessment items that require students to move through multi-step simulations to solve complex problems. In addition, both proposals call for use of artificial intelligence in the scoring of additional item types in order to reduce cost and speed the return of results.

**Informing Instruction and Program Improvement Throughout the School Year:** Both of the Consortia plan to develop and provide to states and districts an online digital library of resources to support improved teaching and learning. Educators across the states could both access and contribute to this library of resources. Formative assessments, model instructional units, and professional development materials — all aligned to the shared standards — would be collected and shared.

**Through-Course Summative Assessments:** The RTTT Assessment Program application defines a through-course summative assessment as “an assessment system component or set of assessment system components that is administered periodically during the academic year.” The PARCC Consortium has included through-course assessments within its design. At the end of the first, second, and third quarter of the school year, students would complete short summative assessments that target a small number of essential skills or concepts. Research would be completed during the pilot phase to determine if and how the scores from these components could be aggregated with the end-of-year assessment for the final annual student score.

The SBAC proposal schedules all summative assessment to occur during the final 12 weeks of the school year. They also propose, however, to investigate the development of a through-course assessment system, which would replace the end-of-year test with several modules taken during the school year. Again, research would be conducted to verify the psychometric quality of this design before use.

## Next Steps

The U.S. Department of Education will hand out awards by the end of September 2010. They may approve one or both of these proposals and may negotiate with Consortium leaders regarding the final designs. Decisions and final, approved designs will be available at: [www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/index.html)

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