

A BIG WIN FOR HAWAII STUDENTS



The Hawaii Common Core Standards

Since 2010, Hawaii has made significant progress towards its “55 by ‘25” goal to increase the percentage of adults with a postsecondary degree to 55% by 2025. In 2014, Hawaii’s on-time high school graduation rate was 82%—in line with many other states. And on the 2013 Nation’s Report Card (also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP), Hawaii was one of just a few states to make noteworthy gains from 2011 NAEP results in 4th and 8th grade reading and math.

Despite these encouraging figures, there is still work to be done to ensure that Hawaii improves educational outcomes for its students and achieve its “55 by ‘25” goal. In 2013, less than one-third of the state’s 4th graders demonstrated proficiency in reading, and both 4th and 8th graders performed below the national average in the subject. In 2012, 36% of students who entered the University of Hawaii system had to enroll in a remedial math course and 31% in a remedial English course—evidence of the misalignment between public education standards and higher education expectations. To address this longstanding disconnect, in 2010 the State Board of Education adopted a set of college- and career-ready standards in English language arts (ELA) and math, known as the Hawaii Common Core, to help ensure that students graduate with the skills needed in college and the workforce. The adoption of these standards was a critical step to ensure that Hawaii continued to make progress toward achieving the goal of “55 by ‘25”.

With the implementation of the Hawaii Common Core Standards, Hawaii is one step closer to ensuring that students will have the opportunity to reach their full potential. By 2020, 70% of jobs in Hawaii will require a postsecondary credential. However, only 44% of adults in the state currently have such a credential. To reach the goal of “55 by ‘25,” the number of degree-holders must increase by almost 11%. Higher standards are essential to helping reach this goal.

Student Proficiency Performance on the Nation’s Report Card

	4th Math	4th Reading	8th Math	8th Reading
Hawaii 2011	40%	27%	30%	26%
Hawaii 2013	46%	30%	32%	28%
National Average 2013	41%	34%	34%	34%



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Better Standards Deserve Better Assessments

Teachers across Hawaii have been hard at work preparing for the standards since their adoption. It has been a significant undertaking involving hours of professional development, curricula alignment, and learning strategies to engage students in the instruction of the standards.

Now that the standards have been fully implemented in all Hawaii public schools, the next phase is to implement an improved assessment that is more meaningful to students, teachers, and parents in determining which standards a student has or has not yet mastered in order to be on track for college and careers. The state needs an assessment to measure the critical thinking and problem solving skills that Hawaii students need to succeed. Improved assessments present an opportunity to move beyond tests that measure rote memorization skills to ones that mirror the higher standards and provide teachers with valuable information on how effectively they are teaching and students are learning.

Putting better assessments in place needs to be part of a larger system of accountability that supports student achievement. At the heart of accountability is the need to ensure that all students across Hawaii have access to the same high-quality education. Meaningful assessments serve as school-wide academic checkups that can identify students who are having difficulty meeting the standards so that interventions can be implemented. In addition, improved assessments can identify high-achieving students who require support to maintain their academic engagement and provide them with the resources necessary to continue to excel.

Since 2010, teams of higher education faculty members, teachers, and testing experts have been working tirelessly to create two new assessment options aligned to college- and career-ready standards: PARCC

(Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. These two assessment systems were field tested in spring 2014 in 35 states, including Hawaii, where 20,000 students in 91 schools participated in the Smarter Balanced field tests.

The assessments aim to do the following:

- Accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness.
- Assess a wide range of real-world skills, including critical thinking and writing skills.
- Provide real-time information on student progress to help guide teacher instruction and improve learning.

Hawaii is a governing member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. These assessments will replace the Hawaii State Assessments (HSA) in grades 3–8 and 11 in ELA and math beginning in spring 2015. The Smarter Balanced assessments measure not only what students know, but also how well they can apply their knowledge in real-world situations by requiring them to demonstrate a variety of research, writing, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. Hawaii teachers will have access to the Smarter Balanced Digital Library, a collection of instructional materials that can be used as academic checkups to ensure students are making developmentally adequate progress. Since the assessments will be given annually in grades 3–8 and 11, the score reports will provide students, parents, and teachers with ongoing opportunities to address issues well before students are ready to graduate.

During this transition, it is important to advocate for key criteria that will make the state assessments a strong measuring stick of how Hawaii students are doing on the path to college and career readiness at the state and national levels. Leaders continue to be enthusiastic about the Smarter Balanced assessments because they meet so many of the criteria that make up a high-quality, aligned assessment.

A High-Quality Assessment:

- Is developed with input from K–12 teachers, higher education faculty, and testing experts.
- Is field tested and reviewed before full implementation.
- Assesses a wide range of real-world skills using a variety of question formats.
- Includes formative or interim assessments that act as academic checkups to ensure that students are keeping pace and meeting developmentally appropriate standards.
- Provides detailed and timely feedback that sends an early warning signal to teachers if students are not on track, so that interventions can be put in place.
- Is comparable across states.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between standards and curriculum?

- Standards are a set of guidelines for what students are expected to know and be able to do at specific points developmental stages in their education. Standards provide the foundation for key components of the education system, including curricula, instructional materials, teacher training, and assessments.
- A curriculum is a course of study. It is set by local school districts and includes the lesson plans, programs, and textbooks that teachers use to teach the content and skills outlined in the standards.

2. If students are learning with different curricula, how can they take the same test?

- Although teachers use different materials and curricula, students still learn the same skills outlined in the standards. Teachers remain creative in their instruction, designing lessons to best reach all students and establishing a classroom where all students can achieve.

3. Will the Smarter Balanced assessment replace the HSA?

- Yes. The Smarter Balanced English language arts and math tests will replace the Hawaii Skills Assessment (HSA) in grades 3–8 and 11.



Better assessments:

- Give an honest, objective report of student progress.
- Ensure all students are held to the same standards.
- Identify learning gaps so academic interventions can be put in place.
- Identify high-achieving students to provide them with the resources necessary to continue to excel.

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium:

- A group of states working together to develop high-quality, computer-adaptive assessments that measure college and career readiness in both math and English language arts.

4. Will assessment scores impact schools and complex areas?

- School-wide assessments will be used as one measure for school accountability. Complex areas will identify struggling students and schools in need of support so that interventions can be put in place to ensure that all students across Hawaii have access to a high-quality education.

5. Will assessment scores impact teachers?

- Student growth, as measured by scores at two different points in time, is one element that will be used in teacher evaluations. Since this is the first year of the Smarter Balanced tests, the student growth model cannot yet be used.

6. Will assessment scores impact students?

- There are no testing achievement level requirements for promotion or graduation.
- Students who reach qualifying achievement levels on the grade 11 assessments will be eligible for direct placement into entry-level college math and English courses at University of Hawaii campuses.

7. What kind of professional development did teachers receive in preparation for the standards and tests?

- Since 2014, the Hawaii Department of Education has worked through a five-phase professional development plan. Hundreds of professional development opportunities have been provided by state staff and thousands more have taken place throughout the complex areas. These have included sessions focused on the shifts in the standards, examining the crosswalks between the previous standards and the Hawaii Common Core, addressing gaps in current instructional materials, deepening understanding of aligned assessments, and learning how to use the curriculum materials to best address the standards.
- The state has delivered professional development via in-person trainings, webinars, digital protocols, and online courses. The state has also partnered with numerous organizations to provide professional development, including the University of Hawaii, Student Achievement Partners, the Dana Center, the BERCC group, and various curriculum providers.

8. What kind of data will be collected? Will it be released?

- Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Hawaii is required to collect data on school performance. Aggregate data collected includes student test scores and information such as attendance, support services, and academic growth. *The state will not release any personally identifiable student information.* Only individuals who interact with students on a daily basis, such as teachers and parents, are allowed to see student-specific information.
- Federal law protects the privacy of student information and education records through the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The only information that will be publicly available will contain aggregate data for schools, districts, and subgroups.

9. How were teachers involved in the test development process?

- Hawaii teachers were involved in online and in-person review of the test questions for content, bias/sensitivity, and accessibility. They also assisted with the development of learning resources in the Digital Library, an online collection of Hawaii Common Core-aligned resources to support teachers.

10. Do students need to be computer literate?

- Students need to be computer literate. Paper and pencil versions will be available during the first three years of testing for schools that cannot meet the technology requirement.

11. Why is computer literacy important?

- While it may take time to ensure that every school has the hardware necessary and meets the technology requirements, this is a smart investment. Ensuring that all students, regardless of geography or household income, have equal access to technology is critical to preparing students for a 21st century competitive workforce.

12. Where can I go for more information?

- www.smarterbalanced.org
- www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/Testing/
- www.BusinessForCore.org