**Assessing Student Readiness for College and Careers:**

**New Field Test is a Practice Run of Smarter Balanced Assessments**

In the time it took for last year’s high school seniors to travel from kindergarten to the graduation stage, we have moved from payphones to smartphones, and from watching our favorite television shows on 50-pound machines in our living rooms to streaming them on feather-weight mobile devices.

So expectations are high for preparing our young people to succeed in college and the workforce. We owe them academic goals that match the reality of today’s economy.

In [INSERT STATE], our plan is to improve education for all students includes rigorous academic standards and assessments that will accurately measure achievement and provide educators with meaningful information to help students succeed. Right now, educators and schools in our state are participating in the Smarter Balanced Field Test, a practice run of these new assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The new standards are a rigorous set of academic goals in English and mathematics.

[INSERT STATE]—along with 44 states and the District of Columbia—adopted the standards because they set clear expectations for learning at each grade level so that students can graduate high school prepared to succeed in college and the workplace. To make sure that state tests keep up with the new standards, [INSERT STATE] joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, one of two multistate consortia developing assessment systems aligned to the Common Core.

The Smarter Balanced member states have worked together to develop a system of online assessments that provide faster and more accurate results for teachers, students, and parents to learn where students stand and where they need help. While the operational assessments won’t be administered until the 2014-15 school year, the Field Test will help ensure the assessments are accurate and fair for all students and provide teachers and schools an opportunity to practice test administration procedures in advance of the assessments next year.

The new assessment system includes tests for grades 3 through 8 and 11 in English language arts/literacy and mathematics that go beyond old multiple-choice tests to include new types of questions, writing at every grade, and performance tasks that ask students to research and analyze information, weigh evidence, and solve real-world problems.

Of course, setting high standards and developing high-quality assessments are just the first steps toward preparing all students for the challenges of college and the workplace. It is up to all of us to make sure students, teachers, and schools have the support they need to meet those goals. It’s hard work. The Smarter Balanced Field Test is an important opportunity to learn more about the new assessments and how to make them a success. It’s a key part of the ongoing agenda in [INSERT STATE] to strengthen our education system for the future.