**Why is my child taking new assessments this year?**

* The [INSERT STATE] Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all of our students are prepared for success.
* The Smarter Balanced Assessment System that we are helping to develop is a key part of implementing the [COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS OR STATE-SPECIFIC NAME] and preparing all students for success in college and careers.
* Smarter Balanced assessments are being “field tested” this year and will be fully operational in the 2014–15 school year.
* The Smarter Balanced assessments provide an academic checkup for students by measuring real-world skills like critical thinking and problem solving. In addition, they provide real-time information during the year to give teachers and parents a better picture of where students are succeeding and where they need help.
* These assessments will replace existing tests, and offer significant improvements over tests of the past, including new types of questions and performance tasks that require students to apply a variety of skills to complete complex tasks that will prepare them for college and the workplace.
* Colleges in [INSERT STATE] are participating in the development of these assessments, with the goal of recognizing student scores on the grade 11 assessments as evidence that students are ready for introductory college courses and can be exempted from non-credit remedial courses.

**What will the assessments cover?**

* The Smarter Balanced assessments will measure real-world skills in English and math, such as analytical reading, persuasive writing, and problem solving.
* Beginning in 2015, in addition to providing composite scores in those two subjects, score reports will provide information on student performance in the following areas:
  + English: reading, writing, listening, and research
  + Math: concepts and procedures; problem solving and modeling/data analysis, and communicating reasoning

**How long will the assessments take?**

* The math and English assessments each have two components:
  + Computer-adaptive assessments: A set of assessment questions in a variety of formats that—beginning in spring 2015—will be customized to each student based on answers to previous questions. In this way, the assessments can most accurately measure each student’s knowledge and skills.
  + Performance tasks: Collections of questions and activities that are coherently connected to a single theme or scenario. These activities are meant to measure capacities such as depth of understanding, writing and research skills, and complex analysis, which cannot be adequately assessed with traditional test questions. The performance tasks will be taken on a computer (but will not be computer-adaptive) and will take one to two class periods to complete.
* These tests are not timed, but we estimate that the English assessment will take 3.5 (for elementary students) to 4 hours (for high school students) and the math assessment will take 2.5 hours (for elementary students) to 3.5 hours (for high school students). In addition, students will have a brief classroom activity to introduce the topic of the performance task. Testing will occur in multiple sessions, so students will typically spend 1 to 2 hours per day on the assessments over several days.
* For the spring 2014 Field Test, most students will take either the English or math assessment [CUSTOMIZE BASED ON STATE TESTING PROCEDURES]. Beginning in 2014-15, when the Smarter Balanced assessments replace existing state tests, students will take both the English and math assessments.

**What is the “Field Test” and what will my child get out of participating in it?**

* This practice run will help ensure that the assessments are accurate and fair for all students. It also gives teachers and schools a chance to practice assessment administration procedures, and students the opportunity to experience the new assessments.
* Smarter Balanced will use information from the Field Test to improve the assessments and plan for their roll-out in the 2014-15 school year.
* Through this practice run, we expect to discover challenges. Working together with teachers and school administrators, states in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium will address any issues identified prior to the launch of the assessment system in the 2014–15 school year.
* In [INSERT STATE], students chosen to participate in the Field Test will take either the English or math assessment [CUSTOMIZE BASED ON STATE TESTING PROCEDURES].

**What consequences will occur if I opt my child out of these assessments?**

* Assessments help to provide valuable information to parents, teachers, and students, and we’re committed to ensuring that they are as accurate as possible and welcome feedback on ways to improve them.
* Ultimately, the greatest penalty for avoiding these assessments is not being able to provide meaningful information on where a student stands on their path to success.
* Colleges and universities in [INSERT STATE] are working with K–12 educators to develop the new assessment system, with the goal that they will be able to use assessment results to exempt students from non-credit courses that repeat material students should have learned in high school. If a high school student does not take the assessments once they become operational, he or she will not have that opportunity to earn an early exemption from these developmental or remedial courses.

**How will my child’s privacy be protected?**

* [INSERT STATE] retains control of all student information, including assessment results.
* In order to make sure the assessments are accurate and fair for all students, Smarter Balanced will collect the following student information:
  + An identification number (the Consortium recommends that this be different from the state’s official unique student identifier so that only the state can link back to a student’s official education record);
  + Race/ethnicity, gender, grade level, school attended;
  + Student eligibility for English language development services or special education services provided to the student;
  + Student eligibility for Title I compensatory programs;
  + Smarter Balanced assessment scores, achievement levels, and responses to assessment questions.
* Unless directed to do so by [INSERT STATE], Smarter Balanced will not collect information such as student names, dates of birth, addresses, etc. that can be used to identify individual students. No parent information will be collected.
* Smarter Balanced, [INSERT STATE], and districts cannot and will not sell student information as prohibited by federal laws like the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.