



Frequently Asked Questions

Spring 2013 Smarter Balanced Pilot

DIRECTIONS: Please click the frequently asked question in order to be automatically directed to the page where the answer is found.

1. Whom do I contact if I have questions about recruitment?
2. Whom do I contact if I have general questions about the pilot or specific questions related to uploading students and navigating the online delivery system?
3. What is the Smarter Balanced pilot assessment?
4. When is the scientific pilot assessment?
5. When is the window for the volunteer assessment?
6. What is the difference between the volunteer and the scientific pilots?
7. What percentage of a district's schools will be chosen for the scientific pilot?
8. What are the pilot participation requirements for my district?
9. Do schools selected for the scientific pilot have to participate? What if a school volunteers but later realizes it cannot participate. Can the school back out?
10. If a school volunteers, are there any parameters the school must follow in terms of which grades and students are tested? For example, can the school have only some students take different parts of the assessment for a lower impact on instructional time?
11. Where can I find documentation on pilot security?
12. Can administrators review the pilot test questions?
13. Is there any cost associated with participating in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium pilot testing?

14. If we commit to this scientific sample for the pilot test, will there be any compensation for the additional time staff will be required to train, plan, and implement the test?
15. What level of participation is required for volunteering schools? Will schools be able to decide how many students, which students, and which grades are tested? Would we need to test all students in each grade, or can we test a few classrooms per grade?
16. Will all schools that volunteer be able to participate?
17. Can scientific sample schools volunteer for other grades and content areas?
18. If my school volunteers via the survey, is my school automatically counted as part of the scientific pilot?
19. If a school participates in the scientific sample and also volunteers for other grades and content areas, can the school pilot at the same time as its scientific sample grades or must it test in the volunteer pilot window?
20. Will schools have to upload student data as they did for the small scale trial?
21. Who can upload students into TIDE?
22. Are district test coordinators allowed to review a list of the schools that have been selected for the scientific study and for the volunteer pilot?
23. Can individual teachers sign up for the volunteer pilot, or is a whole grade at a school needed?
24. Can a whole district volunteer, or can only schools volunteer?
25. If a school volunteers for the pilot, does that mean that school cannot be part of the scientific sample?
26. May volunteer schools access both ELA and math tests?
27. If a scientifically selected school is selected for two grade levels, can the school elect to do just one of the grade levels? And if a school is very large, can it subsample the population?

28. If a scientifically selected school has already been contacted but subsequently encounters unforeseen circumstances and is forced to withdraw, what happens? Can the withdrawing school suggest a replacement?
29. Will any volunteer schools be selected to “fill in gaps” in the scientifically selected school sample if not enough of those schools participate?
30. Logistically it is difficult to administer assessments in our schools because of challenges related to location or because they are virtual schools. What should be done if any of these schools are selected for the scientific pilot?
31. Will there be a time that teachers can log in and experience the test setup so they can adjust teaching practices to simulate the testing experience in their classroom?
32. Are you considering giving pilot schools assessment results in some format, even if not for individual students?
33. How will results from volunteer schools be used by Smarter Balanced?
34. If our district wants to pilot test in only one content area in three different grade levels in three different schools, how do I complete the survey on Survey Monkey?
35. Can students use their Chromebooks to complete the assessment?
36. What are the software requirements?
37. Is there a difference between the minimum technology requirements on the Smarter Balanced website and the technology requirements for the pilot test?
38. My school has already downloaded AIR’s secure browser for statewide testing. Do we need to download another secure browser?
39. Will there be time limits for the test?
40. How long will the test take?
41. When is the volunteer testing window?

42. Does the estimate of “three hours of testing per grade per content area” refer to the total computer lab time, or does that time need to be multiplied by the number of classrooms?
43. Does the volunteer pilot test take the same amount of time as the scientific pilot test?
44. If the two-week window assigned to a school doesn’t work due to a testing conflict, will the school be able to adjust that window?
45. How will a testing window for my school be assigned?
46. Do volunteer schools get to choose when they participate in the volunteer window?
47. If there are dates when a school absolutely cannot test, may a request a specific window be made?
48. Will there be tests for grades 3–11?
49. When will the secure browser be ready to download?
50. When will accommodation information become available?
51. What sort of training will be provided for the pilot and when?
52. My school has students with moderate to severe cognitive disabilities. Are we responsible for participating in the pilot if selected?
53. Why are 9th and 10th grades being tested?
54. Will the length of the Smarter Balanced pilot be shorter than the actual assessment next year?



1. Whom do I contact if I have questions about recruitment?

Please contact the recruitment contractor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC):

Phone: 800-847-3193

Email: SmarterBalancedRecruitment@DataRecognitionCorp.com

2. Whom do I contact if I have general questions about the pilot or specific questions related to uploading students and navigating the online delivery system?

Please contact the AIR Help Desk:

Phone: 866-815-7246

Email: SmarterBalancedHelpDesk@air.org

3. What is the Smarter Balanced pilot assessment?

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is a state-led consortium developing assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language arts/literacy and mathematics that are designed to help prepare all students to graduate from high school college- and career-ready. The pilot gives the Consortium an opportunity to 1) gather data on the functioning of items, 2) conduct initial scaling, and 3) test the online delivery engine. For more information about the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the pilot, click the following link: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/>.

4. When is the scientific pilot assessment?

The window is February 20 through May 10, 2013.

5. When is the window for the volunteer assessment?

The window is early April through May 10, 2013.

6. What is the difference between the volunteer and the scientific pilots?

For the scientific pilot, schools throughout the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium were selected for participation based on certain demographic and psychometric variables. These schools will be assigned to administer an online assessment for particular grades and content areas.

Any school may volunteer for the pilot and will have the opportunity to administer released test items of the pilot. Schools may volunteer at this site: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SmarterBalancedPilot>. Volunteer schools may sign up for any combination of grades and content areas.

7. What percentage of a district's schools will be chosen for the scientific pilot?

Approximately 10% of the schools in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium governing states have been selected as part of the scientific sample. This may or may not translate down to similar proportions at the district level.

8. What are the pilot participation requirements for my district?

Requirements for pilot participation differ depending on whether the school is scientifically selected or is a volunteer school.

Schools selected for the **scientific** sample have distinct characteristics that were determined to be critical for the post-test analysis of item performance. The student performance on items taken during the scientific sample will influence decisions made by the Consortium on future item development and test design. Although participation is not mandatory for the selected schools, the Consortium strongly encourages all schools identified for the scientific sample to participate if feasible.

With the **volunteer** pilot, student responses will not inform the decisions on item development and test design; the opportunity is intended solely to provide early experience with the testing platform and test items before the field-testing in 2014 and the operational administration in 2015.

9. Do schools selected for the scientific pilot have to participate? What if a school volunteers but later realizes it cannot participate. Can the school back out?

Each school selected to participate in the scientific sample was chosen after careful consideration of specific attributes about that school, knowing that its participation would help create a psychometrically balanced sample of student responses and information about student learning. Although the Pilot Test is not mandatory, and with full appreciation of your concerns, we strongly encourage schools to take advantage of this exciting opportunity. Participating in the Pilot Test will offer districts and schools the chance to interact with the online testing system and with new, innovative item types that will be part of future Smarter Balanced assessments in the most authentic way possible. Your participation will also mean your students contributed to decisions about the assessment that goes "live" in the 2014-2015 school year.

- 10. If a school volunteers, are there any parameters the school must follow in terms of which grades and students are tested? For example, can the school have only some students take different parts of the assessment for a lower impact on instructional time?**

Once a school is confirmed as a **volunteer** school for the pilot, that school will have the flexibility to engage in the testing opportunity in the way that best meets its needs—multiple grades, one or both content areas, one grade or class level. The only exception to this would be if a school that volunteers is also identified for the scientific sample. Under this unique circumstance, the school will follow the specific expectations for those grades identified in the scientific sample but will be able to retain flexibility in those grades that are volunteers.

- 11. Where can I find documentation on pilot security?**

This will be found in the Smarter Balanced Pilot Test Administrator Manual and Smarter Balanced Pilot Test Coordinator Manual once they are available. Additionally, please refer to your state's policies on maintaining test security.

- 12. Can administrators review the pilot test questions?**

No. Much like standard testing protocols, tests are not for general viewing, and only students should be viewing the items in the pilot. Staff wishing to become familiar with the types of items should refer to the sample items on the Smarter Balanced website (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/>) and to the training test to be released in January. After the pilot test is over, a practice test is scheduled for release in summer 2013.

- 13. Is there any cost associated with participating in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium pilot testing?**

There are no direct expenditures associated with participating in the pilot. Smarter Balanced cannot address any incidental costs that may be associated with administering the pilot, such as additional proctoring/paraprofessional staff required to support pilot testing needs. However, schools are encouraged to administer the pilot using the facilities at hand or resources that would otherwise have been directed toward in-state pilot events.

- 14. If we commit to this scientific sample for the pilot test, will there be any compensation for the additional time staff will be required to train, plan, and implement the test?**

At this time, there are no Smarter Balanced funds dedicated to supporting individual schools/administrators in this task. There are no direct expenditures associated with participating in the pilot. Smarter Balanced cannot address any incidental costs that may be associated with administering the pilot, such as additional proctoring/paraprofessional staff required to support pilot testing needs. However, schools and districts are encouraged to use resources that would have been directed toward in-state pilot events.

- 15. What level of participation is required for volunteering schools? Will schools be able to decide how many students, which students, and which grades are tested? Would we need to test all students in each grade, or can we test a few classrooms per grade?**

Volunteer schools are able to submit any number of their grades for participation and may volunteer to participate in either or both subjects. They may indicate their selections by completing the online volunteer form at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SmarterBalancedPilot>. Once schools are confirmed as volunteer schools, they may exercise flexibility (e.g., not full grades, part of classes) in the actual administration of the released test items. However, if a volunteer school is also selected as part of the scientific sample, the grade (or grades) identified for the scientific sample will be required to follow the processes associated with the scientific study. Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) will contact sample schools to assign a testing window and notify them of the assessments they will administer.

- 16. Will all schools that volunteer be able to participate?**

Yes. However, schools that volunteer will be taking a different version of the assessment in the same online format as the scientific sample population. Volunteer administrations will start in April.

- 17. Can scientific sample schools volunteer for other grades and content areas?**

Yes. Scientific sample schools can volunteer to test other grades and other content areas when the volunteer administrations commence in April. Identified scientific schools who wish to also participate further in the volunteer sample should volunteer through the Survey Monkey site at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SmarterBalancedPilot>.

Schools monitoring both scientific and volunteer classrooms will be required to manage the differing expectations for each of these groups.

- 18. If my school volunteers via the survey, is my school automatically counted as part of the scientific pilot?**

No. Signing up via the online survey does NOT mean your school is part of the scientific sample as selected scientific schools have already been identified; however, in April, your school will take a different version of the assessment in the same online format as the scientific sample population.

- 19. If a school participates in the scientific sample and also volunteers for other grades and content areas, can the school pilot at the same time as its scientific sample grades or must it test in the volunteer pilot window?**

Only in those instances when the scientific sample pilot administration is occurring after the volunteer pilot opens in April will schools be able to have both administrations happen at the same time. However, we recommend that the scientific sample take priority and be done first if possible, to increase the validity of the scientific sample pilot experience. It will be important for any schools doing both to manage the differences in the expectations between the two different participation paths. For example, there are trainings, webinars, and upload deadlines and requirements that the scientifically selected schools will need to attend to that the volunteer schools will not. These expectations will be communicated to those schools that agreed to be part of the scientific sample.

- 20. Will schools have to upload student data as they did for the small scale trial?**

Yes, student data will have to be uploaded into the Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE), but the format will be different from that used for the small scale trials so it will be important to use the new template. TIDE is scheduled to open on January 7, and the new template will be in TIDE.

- 21. Who can upload students into TIDE?**

Any authorized state, district, or school personnel can upload students into TIDE.

- 22. Are district test coordinators allowed to review a list of the schools that have been selected for the scientific study and for the volunteer pilot?**

Your state lead has been sent a list of all scientifically selected schools for your state. Please contact your state lead for a copy of the list of scientifically selected schools. We are unable to send a list of volunteer schools because the list is updated daily. However, please note that all schools that volunteer are assured an opportunity to participate in the volunteer pilot.

- 23. Can individual teachers sign up for the volunteer pilot, or is a whole grade at a school needed?**

We ask that schools volunteer by grade at the administrator level because schools volunteering for the pilot will also be considered as potential replacements for scientific sample schools that choose to or must withdraw.

24. Can a whole district volunteer, or can only schools volunteer?

Although the volunteer survey is set up in such a way that each school must volunteer separately, we invite all of the schools in a district to volunteer if they would like to participate. A district administrator may complete the survey on behalf of each school in the district, provided they are sufficiently aware of the schools' availability and limitations. If this method is less cumbersome, districts may provide a file that contains all the fields in the online survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SmarterBalancedPilot>) to the American Institutes of Research (AIR).

25. If a school volunteers for the pilot, does that mean that school cannot be part of the scientific sample?

Signing up to be a volunteer school will not eliminate a school from the scientific sample. For the scientific sample, school selection is based on predetermined demographic criteria that will ensure that the pilot items are administered to a representative sample of students. Schools identified as part of the scientific sample will be notified between late November and January.

26. May volunteer schools access both ELA and math tests?

Schools that participate in the volunteer pilot may access both ELA and math tests.

27. If a scientifically selected school is selected for two grade levels, can the school elect to do just one of the grade levels? And if a school is very large, can it subsample the population?

In order to avoid jeopardizing the scientific sample, we encourage full participation of all selected schools. However, we understand that there may be local constraints that inhibit full participation, and we understand that some schools may be able to participate in only one grade level. In those instances where a school is considering reducing its level of participation, the school should notify its state lead, directly or through its district assessment coordinator, to review the situation.

28. If a scientifically selected school has already been contacted but subsequently encounters unforeseen circumstances and is forced to withdraw, what happens? Can the withdrawing school suggest a replacement?

These schools should contact DRC immediately because replacements will need to be found. Smarter Balanced has a prescribed replacement protocol that involves selecting replacement schools from a predetermined list. Replacement schools may also be selected from among volunteer schools. If there are schools in your state that are interested in participating but were not selected to participate, they may register online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SmarterBalancedPilot>.

- 29. Will any volunteer schools be selected to “fill in gaps” in the scientifically selected school sample if not enough of those schools participate?**

Smarter Balanced has a prescribed replacement protocol that involves selecting replacement schools from a predetermined list. Replacement schools may also be selected from among volunteer schools. If there are schools that are interested in participating but were not selected to participate, they may register online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SmarterBalancedPilot>.

- 30. Logistically it is difficult to administer assessments in our schools because of challenges related to location or because they are virtual schools. What should be done if any of these schools are selected for the scientific pilot?**

While we would like all schools to be able to participate in the pilot test, we understand that this will not always be possible. There are some challenging situations that will prevent a school from being able to test in the scientific pilot. If this occurs, please bring the situation to our attention so that we may work toward supporting your schools and Smarter Balanced in the future.

- 31. Will there be a time that teachers can log in and experience the test setup so they can adjust teaching practices to simulate the testing experience in their classroom?**

District/school staff will have the opportunity to take the training test beginning on January 15 so that they may experience the assessment system. Additionally, scientific sample schools will receive training on all aspects of the assessment through a WebEx presentation and five self-paced online training modules. A webinar will be presented on multiple occasions beginning in January. The modules will be ready at the end of January. Sample items and content specifications may also be viewed on the Smarter Balanced webpage at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/>.

Note that due to security policy, only students may view the pilot test. Teachers and administrators may NOT view the assessment.

- 32. Are you considering giving pilot schools assessment results in some format, even if not for individual students?**

As with many pilot tests, there will be no scores or data associated with the pilot test (either scientific or volunteer).

- 33. How will results from volunteer schools be used by Smarter Balanced?**

There will be no results from the administration of the volunteer pilot administrations. These responses will not be stored by Smarter Balanced. However, all general information from the pilot administration will be used to inform the functionality of the system for future years.

- 34. If our district wants to pilot test in only one content area in three different grade levels in three different schools, how do I complete the survey on Survey Monkey?**

For your district's purpose, all you should have to do to volunteer for the grades/schools/content areas desired is to complete a separate online survey form for each school. However, note that schools selected for the scientific sample must adhere to assignment rules and would not have the level of flexibility you have described.

- 35. Can students use their Chromebooks to complete the assessment?**

Yes, students may test on Chromebooks. For more information about supported technology and technology requirements, please refer to the *Smarter Balanced Technology Strategy Framework and System Requirements Specifications* posted on the Smarter Balanced website at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/news/smarter-balanced-releases-technology-strategy-framework-and-system-requirements-specifications/>.

- 36. What are the software requirements?**

Please refer to the *Smarter Balanced Technology Strategy Framework and System Requirements Specifications* posted on the Smarter Balanced website (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/news/smarter-balanced-releases-technology-strategy-framework-and-system-requirements-specifications/>) for information about supported technology and technology requirements.

- 37. Is there a difference between the minimum technology requirements on the Smarter Balanced website and the technology requirements for the pilot test?**

The pilot test was developed to support all of the requirements indicated in the *Smarter Balanced Technology Strategy Framework and System Requirements Specifications*, which is posted on the Smarter Balanced website.

- 38. My school has already downloaded AIR's secure browser for statewide testing. Do we need to download another secure browser?**

States that currently use AIR's secure browser for their statewide testing must download the "Pilot" secure browser when it is ready. However, they do not need to uninstall their state secure browser. Both browsers can be installed at the same time.

- 39. Will there be time limits for the test?**

The tests are untimed, but depending on the grade, content area, and type of items administered, some tests will take longer than others to administer and schools should plan accordingly.

40. How long will the test take?

The tests are untimed, but depending on the grade, content area, and type of items administered, test times can range anywhere from two to approximately three hours.

41. When is the volunteer testing window?

When schools volunteer through the volunteer pilot survey, they are asked to volunteer to participate any time during the pilot test window (February 20–May 10, 2013). Schools selected as scientific sample schools will be assigned a specific two-week testing window. However, the volunteer schools' window is slated to begin during the latter portion of the pilot test window, early April through May 10, 2013.

42. Does the estimate of “three hours of testing per grade per content area” refer to the total computer lab time, or does that time need to be multiplied by the number of classrooms?

The estimated time is a student testing time estimate. This would need to be calculated out to a school testing time dependent on factors at the school level.

43. Does the volunteer pilot test take the same amount of time as the scientific pilot test?

Details on exact times are still being determined, but the volunteer experience is not expected to take longer than the scientific pilot.

44. If the two-week window assigned to a school doesn't work due to a testing conflict, will the school be able to adjust that window?

Possibly, within some constraints. There are multiple factors that impact the assigned testing windows. This can be discussed on a case-by-case basis during the recruitment phone call, but there are no guarantees that all needs can be met. Please let DRC know that you would like to test but have an issue with the window.

45. How will a testing window for my school be assigned?

When your school is contacted to participate as a scientific school in the pilot test, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) will work with the school to determine a testing window. However, testing windows are constrained by other factors, such as the grades that will be assessed.

46. Do volunteer schools get to choose when they participate in the volunteer window?

Volunteer schools may participate any time during the volunteer window (early April through May 10, 2013).

47. If there are dates when a school absolutely cannot test, may a request a specific window be made?

We certainly understand your scheduling concerns. Unfortunately, it is not possible to request specific dates, as tests at different grade levels will be available in the system only at certain predetermined times. However, within the window of availability for a test, there is some limited flexibility based on the volume of schools testing at a single time. When a school is contacted by Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) to participate, DRC and the school will identify a date during which the school can test.

48. Will there be tests for grades 3–11?

Yes, there will be tests for 3–11.

49. When will the secure browser be ready to download?

The secure browser will be available for download on January 3.

50. When will accommodation information become available?

This information should be available in January.

51. What sort of training will be provided for the pilot and when?

Various types of training will be available for students, test administrators, and test coordinators. For the scientific sample schools, this will include training modules and live webinars. Dates and times will be advertised soon. For the volunteer pilot, the training modules and webinars will be posted to the Smarter Balanced portal (<http://sbac.portal.airast.org/>) for access at an individual's convenience; there will be no live training opportunities.

52. My school has students with moderate to severe cognitive disabilities. Are we responsible for participating in the pilot if selected?

Students with severe cognitive disabilities and for whom available pilot accommodations are not available may be exempted from pilot participation. If this applies to the majority of your school, then your school will not be responsible for any assessments during the pilot, and we will designate a replacement school for the grades and subject areas initially assigned to your school. Please notify DRC so that a replacement can be found.

53. Why are 9th and 10th grades being tested?

Ninth and tenth grade students are being tested in this pilot for “scaling” purposes. This allows test developers to get an estimation of preliminary student growth (change in test responses) between 8th and 11th grades.

54. Will the length of the Smarter Balanced pilot be shorter than the actual assessment next year?

The length of the operational test is estimated at four to four and a half hours for ELA and three to four hours for math for the operational test. For scheduling purposes, schools should plan for approximately three hours of testing for the pilot test, although some students will have their test sessions run longer based on the item types presented. The length of the field test (the 2013–2014 test) activity has not been decided, but one could expect the needed time to be no greater than that estimated for the operational test.