



Montana
Office of Public Instruction
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent



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TO: Montana Educators
FROM: Judy Snow, State Assessment Director
RE: Smarter Large Scale Volunteer Pilot Replaced by Practice Tests
DATE: May 2013

Due to the overwhelming demand for access to the Volunteer Pilot assessment from principals, teachers, parents, and the public, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium has decided to release a more complete and more broadly available “practice test” in lieu of the Volunteer Pilot assessment.

Like the planned Volunteer Pilot, the Practice Test will allow students to experience items that look and function like those found on the Scientific Pilot.

- The Practice Test will also include performance tasks (not previously planned for the Volunteer Pilot), and will be constructed to follow a test blueprint similar to the blueprint intended for the operational test.
- With the Practice Test, teachers will be able to construct simulated assessment events for their students.
- Additionally, online access to the Practice Test will not require a unique username and password, meaning that schools and districts can use the Practice Test for professional development activities and for discussions with parents, policymakers, and other interested stakeholders.

The Practice Test will provide

- administrators and parents with access to items planned and designed for the new assessment;
- students with access to the tests over the summer, with the Practice Test being accessible right up to the rollout of the operational assessment;
- a full array of item types, including performance tasks;
- Versions supporting several accommodations:
 - Text-to-speech
 - Item-level pop-up Spanish glossaries for construct-irrelevant terms (Math tests only)
 - Braille
 - American Sign Language (ASL)

NOTE: Accommodated forms will be released in phases across the listed grade/content combinations:

1. Phase 1 – May 29:
Accommodations available in grades 3, 7, and 11 for Math and in grades 4, 7, and 11 for ELA; no ASL support for any grades
2. Phase 2 – {TBD, based on vendor production capacity}:
Accommodations in all grades for both content areas; no ASL support for any grades
3. Phase 3 – {TBD, based on vendor production capacity}:
ASL accommodation in all grades and content areas

This modification to the Smarter Balanced plans will result in a delay to the availability of a test for those schools that had volunteered earlier. That is, the Volunteer Pilot will not be accessible April 9 as originally planned; instead, the Practice Test will be available beginning Wednesday, May 29. We understand that for many schools, this later start date may be too close to – or, in some cases, after – the end of the school year to allow an early opportunity to engage with this new release. However, we hope the benefits outlined in this memo, including the fact that the Practice Test will remain open throughout the summer and across the next school year, will mitigate the delay. Additional information related to the Practice Test availability and access will be provided by the Office of Public Instruction.

For more information:

Please visit Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium online

<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/>

Contact OPI Assessment Office

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