



**Smarter Balanced Releases Draft Initial Achievement Level Descriptors for Public Review**  
*Feedback sought for descriptions of student performance on Common Core assessments*

**OLYMPIA, Wash. – November 27, 2012** - The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) today announced the availability of draft initial achievement level descriptors (ALDs) for feedback and review through January 15, 2013. Developed by K-12 teachers, higher education faculty, and content experts, the initial ALDs describe levels of student performance in English language arts/literacy and mathematics on the Smarter Balanced assessments. Smarter Balanced has also released a college content-readiness definition with associated implications for 12<sup>th</sup> grade and postsecondary coursework at each achievement level on the 11<sup>th</sup> grade assessment.

“The development of initial ALDs represents an important milestone toward achieving agreement between K-12 and higher education about the skills and knowledge students need to demonstrate to succeed in college,” said Jacqueline King, Ph.D., director of higher education collaboration for Smarter Balanced. “Smarter Balanced welcomes feedback from educators, partners, and interested stakeholders on the initial ALDs and the college content-readiness definition.”

The Smarter Balanced system of ALDs is based upon four levels of achievement that describe whether students have demonstrated “deep command,” “sufficient command,” “partial command,” or “minimal command” of knowledge, skills, and processes across the two assessed content areas of English language arts/literacy and mathematics. Smarter Balanced is developing an integrated suite of ALDs that serve different purposes for item writing, standard-setting, and reporting results. Reporting ALDs—which provide guidance to students and parents about how to interpret performance on the assessments—will be developed following standard setting in 2014.

The initial ALDs were developed in October by K-12 teachers and administrators and higher education faculty from two- and four-year colleges and universities representing Smarter Balanced Governing States. Following the review period, the initial ALDs will be revised. Governing States are expected to adopt the initial ALDs in March 2013. A full description of the ALDs, the college content-readiness definition and policy framework, and an online survey for providing feedback are available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/achievement-level-descriptors-and-college-readiness/>.

“The Smarter Balanced initial ALDs are tightly aligned with the Common Core State Standards, providing clear direction about the rigor and scope of the assessment system,” said William Schmidt, Ph.D., professor at Michigan State University and a participant in the Smarter Balanced ALD drafting workshop.

Smarter Balanced recognizes that college readiness encompasses a wide array of additional knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will not be measured by the assessment system. The draft college content-readiness definition is focused on the core areas of ELA/literacy and mathematics described by the Common Core State Standards. Smarter Balanced also recognizes the limits of relying on a single assessment for high-stakes decisions and fully supports the use of multiple measures to determine student course placement. As a result, the policy framework encompasses the evaluation of evidence of 12<sup>th</sup> grade learning and the use of additional data drawn from placement tests or other sources to determine appropriate course

placement in higher education. The college content-readiness definition and policy framework are not designed to inform college or university admission decisions.

Smarter Balanced is developing a balanced system of assessments—with formative, interim, and summative components—that measure achievement and growth toward college and career readiness. The work of Smarter Balanced is guided by the belief that a high-quality assessment system can provide information and tools for teachers and schools to improve instruction and help students succeed—regardless of disability, language, or background.

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### **About Smarter Balanced**

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium brings together states to create a common, innovative assessment system for mathematics and English language arts/literacy that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards and helps prepare students for college and careers. The Consortium involves educators, researchers, policymakers, and community groups in a transparent and consensus-driven process to help all students thrive in a knowledge-driven global economy. The Consortium's projects are funded through a four-year, \$175 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, comprising 99 percent of activity resources, with the remaining support provided through generous contributions of charitable foundations. Membership is open to any interested U.S. state. For more information, please visit [www.smarterbalanced.org](http://www.smarterbalanced.org).