



SBAC TALKING POINTS AND FAQs

A Framework for Interpretation

It's a beginning – this year's scores are a baseline.

It's a transition – results may show fewer students have the knowledge and skills right now, but we are on the right path.

It's the information we need – to help prepare our students for success in college and careers.

About SBAC and the Common Core State Standards

1. What is SBAC?

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessment is administered as part of California's state testing program. It assesses student mastery of the Common Core State Standards. SBAC was implemented in Spring 2015 in California and in 16 other states that have also adopted the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and Math as their new rigorous state standards.

Both the SBAC ELA and Math online tests consisted of the following two components:

- *Computer-adaptive questions:*
A set of test questions in a variety of question types that adjust to each student based on the student's answers to previous questions. This section includes a range of items types, such as selecting several correct responses for one item, typing out a response, fill-in short answers/tables, graphing, drag and drop, etc.
- *Performance tasks:*
Collections of wider range of tasks tailored to more accurately measure a student's ability to apply knowledge and skills across multiple standards, under a single theme or scenario. These activities are meant to measure a student's depth of understanding, writing and research skills, and analysis and critical thinking skills.

SBAC results provide one measure of student knowledge of the subject matter, critical thinking, analytical writing, and problem-solving skills needed to prepare for and succeed in today's world.



In addition, SBAC performance data provides important information to determine whether students are on track to pursue college and career by the time they graduate from high school.

2. How is SBAC similar to or different from the California Standards Tests of the past?

SBAC, like the California Standards Tests (CST), is an end-of-year state test of ELA and Math performance.

SBAC is substantially different from the CST in the following ways:

- It is based on new more rigorous state standards (Common Core), and provides an overall performance score and level in ELA and Math, as well as performance levels in seven sub-areas (called “claims”) across ELA and Math.
- Students take the tests on computers, not paper and pencil like the CST.
- SBAC has “computer adaptive” questions as well as “performance tasks” that help measure whether students can apply skills they’ve learned to solve problems. The CST had multiple-choice questions with one right answer on the page, which led to some students guessing rather than engaging in critical thinking.
- SBAC performance tasks are scored by people, and allow students to demonstrate research, writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills. The CST was entirely scored by machine, reading the scanned paper answer sheets where students “bubbled in” their answers in pencil.

3. Who took SBAC? Did English Learners and students with disabilities take SBAC?

In Spring 2015, most students in grades 3-8 and 11 took SBAC in English Language Arts and mathematics, and tests were taken on computers. All students had access to resources such as scratch paper, and there was no time limit to complete the test.

In addition, the Smarter Balanced assessment system provided accurate measures of achievement and growth for students with disabilities and English Learners. The computer-based tests addressed visual, hearing, and physical barriers— allowing nearly all students to demonstrate what they know and can do.

Additionally, the tests include multiple tools (e.g., digital notepad), supports (e.g., a translated pop-up glossary in 11 languages), and accommodations (e.g., Braille and closed captioning for students with sight/hearing disabilities) to adapt to every



student's distinct needs and learning styles. For more information, click to view 21 minute video [Embedded Universal Tools and Online Features](#).

However, some students did not take SBAC. English Learners in the U.S. for less than a year did not take the English Language Arts portion of SBAC. Students with severe cognitive disabilities as outlined in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) did not take SBAC -- instead, they took the California Alternate Assessment Field Test for English Language Arts or Math.

4. What are the Common Core State Standards and how are they related to SBAC?

The Common Core standards are not national standards. Instead, they are common standards that were developed in 2009-2010 by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association for Best Practices.

To date, 43 states have voluntarily adopted the Common Core as their state educational standards. The Common Core standards define the knowledge and skills students should take away from their K-12 schooling to be successfully prepared for college and career opportunities.

Teachers and parents need information about whether students are meeting the expectations set by the Common Core. The Smarter Balanced assessment system measures mastery of the knowledge and skills aligned to the Common Core State Standards. In 2014-15, 17 states administered SBAC for the first time. As a result we can now look at how students in other states are doing in mastering a common set of standards.

5. What is meant by a computer-adaptive test (CAT)? How was SBAC computer adaptive?

SBAC used a particular model of computer adaptive testing. When a student took SBAC, the computer provided higher or lower level questions within his/her grade level, based upon whether the student answered the prior question correctly or incorrectly. If a student answered correctly, s/he was automatically given a more difficult question. If a student answered incorrectly, s/he was given a less difficult question. This process continued until a student's pattern of responses indicated the student's performance level.

In the SBAC computer-adaptive model, students were only asked questions based on their grade-specific Common Core standards. This is very different from some other computer-adaptive tests, such as the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), or the former



paper-based California Standards Test (CST), in which students would be asked questions that are above and below their current grade level.

The SBAC scores on the computer-adaptive portion of the test are then combined with the scores on the short answer and performance task items to give a student an overall score that is within his/her grade level range. The scores are always between 2000 and 3000. Click to view a 13 minute video, [What is a CAT?](#) For more information on SBAC's model of computer adaptive testing, click to view and/or download the SBAC CAT [factsheet](#).

How should we interpret the SBAC scores?

6. How is SBAC scored?

The computer adaptive questions are scored by computer, using the pattern scoring described in #5, above. The constructed response items and the performance tasks are scored by people.

SBAC scores on the computer adaptive portion of the test are then combined with human-scored items to give each student an overall score in English Language Arts and an overall score in Mathematics that is within his/her grade level range. The overall scores are always between 2100 (low) and 2900 (high).

This year's SBAC scores will establish a new baseline for the progress we expect students to make over time. Click to view the [Smarter Balanced Scale Score Ranges](#) by content area and grade level.

7. How should we interpret the SBAC scores?

Keep in mind that SBAC scores are part of a larger picture. SBAC, while very important, is one annual assessment, taken at one point in time. Each student's true academic ability is best measured in light of data from multiple assessments throughout the year, such as portfolios and presentations of student work across content areas, classroom assignments and quizzes, districtwide assessments, and report card grades.

The SBAC scores from the end of last year are a baseline. They are a starting point in measuring mastery of new standards in two content areas: English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. We have not seen a new baseline for student achievement since 2002, when California introduced its new Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) tests including the California Standards Test (CST). The new CST baseline



scores started off much lower than on previous state tests aligned to different standards. However, student results improved steadily over the next 3-4 years. SBAC scores are expected to demonstrate similar growth over time.

A student's score indicates an overall performance level within his/her grade level range. In addition, the score report breaks down the overall score into big areas (also called "claims") and gives a performance level for each. In English Language Arts/Literacy, the areas are: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Research/Inquiry. In Mathematics, the areas are: Problem Solving & Modeling/Data Analytics, Concepts & Procedures, and Communicating Reasoning. The performance levels for each area or claim are: Above Standard, At or Near Standard, or Below Standard.

The SBAC scores are not intended to conclusively determine a child's comprehensive academic progress in school. SBAC scores will not be used to determine if a student moves on to the next grade or if s/he is eligible for high school graduation.

Click to access more [state resources](#) available to help you understand the student score reports as well as new SBAC Parent Guides.

8. Can we compare how students did on SBAC to the former California Standards Tests (CSTs)?

No, trying to compare these two tests is like comparing apples to oranges. The following are just a few of the differences:

- Different standards (California State Standards vs Common Core Standards)
- Different testing methods (paper vs computer)
- Different scoring system (simple percentage correct vs complex pattern scoring)
- Different levels of Depth of Knowledge (DOK 1-2 vs DOK 3-4)
- Different test purpose (prepare for next grade-level vs prepare for next steps in life – college and career)

9. On the student score reports, what is meant by an Area or Claim? Are there sub-scores available by Area or Claim?

Claim areas are simple statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do in order to be prepared for college and career paths. Students will have answered questions in each of the following seven claim areas, with greater or lesser success:



English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy

1. Reading – demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts.
2. Writing – producing clear and purposeful writing
3. Listening – demonstrating effective communication skills
4. Research/Inquiry – investigating, analyzing, and presenting information

Mathematics

5. Problem Solving & Modeling Data Analysis – using appropriate tools and strategies to solve real world and mathematical problems
6. Concepts & Procedures – applying mathematical concepts and procedures
7. Communicating Reasoning – demonstrating ability to support mathematical conclusions

These claim areas align to groups of related standards, and are intended to help educators teach to a level that will promote higher level thinking and student achievement.

- Claim 1 reading questions are the most similar to CST, yet more difficult because the complexity of the reading passages is higher, students must explain their thinking, and it is not easy to guess the right answer.
- Claim 2 writing was only tested at grades 4 and 7 on the CST, but now on SBAC, all students must demonstrate an ability to write.
- Claims 3 and 4 get at the heart of showing a much deeper level of understanding and are completely new – never tested on CST.
- Claim 6 these questions involve basic math calculations, but students must select their answers in very different ways (drag & drop, matching, etc.) than on CST, which didn't require strategic thinking.
- Claims 5 and 7 are cognitively demanding, completely new, never tested on CST.

SBAC does not provide a score for each Claim Area, but does provide a performance level: Above Standard, At or Near Standard, or Below Standard. These levels are meant to provide more specific information regarding areas of strengths and areas in need of improvement. However, they are just a starting point for investigating how to best tailor instruction to that student. SBAC isn't designed to diagnose the root causes of a student's academic challenges or successes. Additional diagnostic assessments are required before a teacher is to be able to decide on an appropriate instructional course of study.



10. On the student score reports, what is meant by the Early Assessment Program for 11th grade students?

California tests for 11th grade students include the Early Assessment Program (EAP) college-ready achievement levels in English Language Arts and math. The EAP predicts a student's ability to successfully complete college-level English or math when s/he begins college.

Students who perform at EAP Achievement Level 4: Standard Met (the highest level) are exempt from taking placement tests upon entering a California State University (CSU) or participating California community college, and may move directly into college-level courses. Students who perform at EAP Achievement Level 3 are encouraged to take appropriate courses in their 12th grade year in order to move directly into college-level courses. More information on next steps for students at EAP Achievement Level 3 can be found at www.csusuccess.org.

EAP achievement levels for 11th grade SBAC test-takers are shown on the back of the California Assessment of Performance and Progress (CAASPP) Individual Student Score Report.

11. How can the SBAC scores be used by teachers, parents, and students?

Teachers and principals will have full access to 2014-15 SBAC reports on Wednesday, September 9, via the new Illuminate assessment system. Teachers will be able to access both the results of the students currently listed on their 2015-16 class roster as well as the results of students on their 2014-15 class roster. So, for example, a middle school will have SBAC results for its current 6th graders, showing how they did on SBAC during their 5th grade year. This same middle school will also have access to SBAC scores for all of its students who took SBAC last year. Click here for more information on how to access [Illuminate](#) SBAC summative results.

Teachers can use SBAC results to:

1. Group students with similar results in each claim area for instruction
2. Identify appropriate support materials & instructional strategies based on results
3. Analyze the SBAC test blueprint to find the higher Depth of Knowledge (DOK) assessment targets and claim areas to provide targeted instruction
4. Provide a full range of DOK entry levels for students to choose from when completing complex classroom performance tasks
5. Use SBAC as a baseline and monitor student progress, using other literacy and math assessments throughout the year



6. Meet with parents whose children are performing in the “Standard Not Met” level to develop an instructional support plan, with specific classroom and home activities.

Principals will have non-embargoed access to 2014-15 SBAC interactive dashboards on Wednesday, September 9th via OUSDdata.org.

Principals can use SBAC scores to:

1. Lead teacher professional development re: SBAC results
2. Lead Parent SBAC Results nights
3. Lead grade level cycles of inquiry to analyze results
4. Identify achievement gaps and develop plans to accelerate students
5. Use data to set up appropriate before/after school intervention programs
6. Adjust school site plan and target school resources to be able to meet identified needs as shown in SBAC results

Parents will have access to 2014-15 state, county, district, and school SBAC data on Wednesday, September 9, via the California Department of Education website. Parents will receive their own child’s CAASPP student score report, including SBAC results, by end of September via US mail, or may request a copy from the school in October.

Parents can:

1. Attend an SBAC Results presentation or workshop at their child’s school
2. Read the state’s SBAC Parent Guides
3. Read the PTA Parent Guides to Success
4. Watch the state’s video, [“Understanding Your Child’s Score Report”](#)
5. Volunteer to help at your child’s school

Communicating SBAC Results with Families

12. When will parents receive their students’ SBAC results?

OUSD expects to receive Individual Student Score Reports in late September. These student score reports include SBAC and any other state test a student may have taken as part of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), the new state testing program.

OUSD will mail the student score reports to parents within 20 days of taking delivery from the state. We will also mail a copy of each student’s score report to their



current school to include in the student's records (cumulative folder). If parents don't receive their child's score report in the mail by October, then they may request a copy from the school.

13. Will the score reports be translated into other languages?

The state publishes the Individual Student Score Reports in English. An OUSD cover letter will be mailed to families along with the individual score report. The district's cover letter will be translated into multiple languages: Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian/Khmer, and Arabic.

The "[Understanding the CAASPP Student Score Reports](#)" guides for parents are available in 10 different languages. Click to see the English version: [Sample CAASPP Student Score Report](#).

14. How will parents learn how to read their students' score reports?

Each school is planning to meet with groups of parents to show them how to read and interpret their student's score report, and to learn more about how students at their child's school performed overall on their first SBAC. Click to view [OUSD's Sample Parent Presentation Slides](#).

In addition, OUSD has several helpful SBAC resources, including videos in English and Spanish explaining how to understand the score reports, available on the following district webpage: <http://www.ousd.org/Page/13306>

15. Will the new scores tell me if my child is performing above/below grade level?

No, the scores are grade specific. This means the score only measures the student's ability at his or her current grade level at the time the test was taken. It will not measure if a student is demonstrating competency above or below their actual grade level.

16. What do the new SBAC student performance levels mean?

There are four overall performance levels for each grade level in ELA and in math: Standard Not Met, Standard Nearly Met, Standard Met, and Standard Exceeded. Each level is intended to be an indicator of college and career readiness by the time a student graduates from high school.

- **Standard Not Met** means that students are not meeting the grade level Common Core standards and need additional supports and substantial



improvement to be successful in future coursework.

- **Standard Nearly Met** means that students can comprehend and complete complex tasks near grade level standards.
- **Standard Met** means that a student can complete complex tasks at their current grade level and demonstrates the knowledge and skills in English language arts/literacy or Math for success in future coursework. Students in this performance level are on track for College & Career Readiness.
- **Standard Exceeded** means that students are performing at the high end of their grade level standards. Students in this performance level are solidly on track for College & Career Readiness.

The overall score indicates where a student's performance falls within the score range for a specific grade level. These four levels can be likened to zones of cognitive mastery or zones of proximal development that help educator to put in place appropriate instructional strategies and materials to support students to make reasonable academic gains. Please note, **SBAC scores do not impact grades, grade point average (GPA), class ranking, or college admissions.**

Comparison to Other California School Districts

17. Did test scores drop?

SBAC is a new assessment system with a new way of scoring. Therefore, it is not possible to compare the new scores directly with the old state assessment scores. So it is not appropriate to say SBAC scores dropped or improved in relation to former CST English Language Arts and Math scores.

Simply put, the SBAC tests **are** harder. Students answered more complex questions and solved more complex problems. Because the rigor is higher, it may appear that SBAC scores have dropped. We expected that, at least initially, fewer students would meet or exceed these new, higher standards. However, as teachers and students become more familiar with the Common Core and better equipped to meet the challenges they present, we expect steady improvement over the next 3-4 years. We know when more is expected of them, students rise to meet the challenge.

This is also the first time that students have taken annual state tests on a computer. SBAC questions required students to engage with tech-enhanced items involving "drag and drop," typing a written response, etc. As students have more year-round practice using computers for research, writing, and assessments, they will also gain

the computer skills needed to be more successful for SBAC.

18. How did Oakland students perform on SBAC compared to other large urban districts in California? To other Bay Area districts? To other CORE waiver districts?

Oakland’s baseline results: Overall, 19% of OUSD students scored Standard Met in English Language Arts, and another 10% scored Standard Exceeded. In Mathematics, 14% of OUSD students scored Standard Met and another 9% scored Standard Exceeded. This is our 2015 Baseline, and our students will make further progress this school year.

Bay Area districts’ results: Oakland’s overall results were similar to nearby districts such as Hayward, San Leandro, San Lorenzo, and West Contra Costa County. Other Bay Area districts such as Berkeley, Albany, Fremont, and San Jose had higher overall baseline results in both English Language Arts and Mathematics.

CORE Waiver districts’ results: Oakland’s overall results were also similar to three of the six CORE waiver districts: Los Angeles, Fresno, and Santa Ana. The other two CORE waiver districts, San Francisco and Long Beach, posted higher overall baseline results in both English Language Arts and Mathematics.

CORE WAIVER DISTRICTS

	ELA		Math	
	Met	Exceeded	Met	Exceeded
Oakland	19	10	14	9
Fresno	20	7	13	5
Los Angeles	23	10	16	9
Long Beach	27	15	20	11
San Francisco	29	23	23	25
Santa Ana	19	6	15	6



ALAMEDA COUNTY DISTRICTS - Partial list

	ELA		Math	
	Met	Exceeded	Met	Exceeded
Oakland	19	10	14	9
Alameda	33	30	27	28
Albany	36	35	29	39
Berkeley	28	30	24	30
Fremont	30	41	21	49
Hayward	24	8	14	7
Newark	32	15	22	13
San Leandro	24	10	15	7
San Lorenzo	21	7	15	6

19. Why were some districts' SBAC scores so much higher than others?

With any state assessment there is variation across districts, and within districts, there is variation across schools. There is no single reason for the variation.

This year is the first time SBAC was given, so the data constitutes a baseline from which every school, district, county, and state expects to measure growth on SBAC moving forward.

20. Will schools receive an Academic Performance Index score or some kind of rating based on the SBAC results?

No, this is a baseline year for SBAC. The state is not issuing Academic Performance Index (API) scores. There will also be no Similar Schools Rank comparing a school's API with 100 schools across California that serve similar students and have similar conditions.



Oakland's Plan to Increase SBAC Scores on Next Year

21. What is OUSD doing to support students in mastering the Common Core standards? What strategies and programs is OUSD using to boost performance next year?

We are focusing on supporting teacher to provide rigorous instruction for every student, every day. We are implementing Common Core-aligned curriculum for English Language Arts/Literacy and Math instruction, and we are using a common framework for effective teaching practices.

22. What is OUSD doing to close the achievement gaps?

We are providing specialized supports for acceleration in English Language Arts/Literacy and Math. In ELA, we are using Fountas & Pinnell's Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) and Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS). In Math, we are implementing the Scholastic Math Inventory districtwide to better assess our student's math skills. We have also moved to a digital platform called Illuminate to track student data on all state, district, and classroom formative and summative assessments, and to provide online tests that mirror SBAC.

We are using our Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) supplemental and concentration funds to target resources to English Learners, Foster Youth, low-income students, and all other students who have not yet met the standard for the grade level.

23. How is OUSD replicating success of the higher performing schools?

- Pairing with higher performing schools in Oakland and in other CORE Waiver districts to learn from each other
- Schools participating in a Community of Practice to share and learn together with a common focus
- Expanding grade levels served at some higher performing schools