A founding principle of Smarter Balanced is that teachers and students need high quality data, tools, and resources to support improvements in student learning. Smarter Balanced isn't just an end-of-year accountability test. It is an assessment system that features flexible, non-secure interim assessments to be offered at teachers' and schools' discretion throughout the school year and a digital library of formative assessment tools, practices, and professional development resources built by teachers, for teachers to improve the quality of information collected through the daily classroom activities of assignments, quizzes, and observation of student work.

The end-of-year tests will help schools evaluate how well their students performed by comparing their aggregate data with aggregate data from other schools across the nation. The end-of-year assessments also will empower students and parents by providing them with a clear indication of how well children are progressing toward mastering the academic knowledge and skills necessary for college and career readiness.

Smarter Balanced is committed to transparency. All of the key documents describing the assessment (content specifications, item specifications, item writing training materials, test blueprints, accommodations framework, achievement level descriptors, technology specifications, etc.) are available to the public on the Smarter Balanced website (www.SmarterBalanced.org).

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Mathematics – Selected-Response Item (Grade 4)

Students often had to wait until grade 8 or high school to hear that multiplication and division are "inverse operations." Operations in early grades with the Common Core State Standards ask young students to understand the relationship between addition and subtraction, and similarly the relationship between multiplication and division. Problem solving provides a natural opportunity for students to understand this relationship in a deeper way than we have seen in past mathematics resources and assessments. The traditionally labeled "fact families" that appeared in mathematics resources often disappeared before students were even able to make connections about why they were important to learn in the first place.

In this problem, students are asked to choose all equations that represent the problem, which requires students to both understand and interpret the relationship between multiplication and division in the context of a word problem. Past assessments have often tried to assess multiplication and division as separate skills, while the Smarter Balanced assessments will highlight the relationship between the operations to support the knowledge and skills that students need for later study of algebra.

22

Scott is reading a book that has 172 pages. Melanie is reading a book that has three times as many pages as Scott's book.

How many pages does Melanie's book have? Select all the equations that represent this problem.

$172 \div 3 = \square$ $3 \times \square = 172$

$172 \times 3 = \square$ $\square \div 3 = 172$

$\square \div 172 = 3$ $172 \div \square = 3$

1

Mathematics – Technology-Enhanced Item (High School)

This high school item has many noteworthy features. First, it attends to the coherence of the standards by drawing on content across multiple grade levels to illustrate that problem solving often requires students to know which tools and knowledge to draw upon in responding to a question. We have a long history in math classrooms of giving students problems to solve that align to "this chapter," which takes away most of the challenge associated with good problem solving. This sample item allows students to make a decision about how much water is moved from Tank A to Tank B to solve the problem. Some students may decide to move only a little bit of water and others may decide to empty Tank A. Neither strategy is right or wrong, but both are available and represent one of the nice features of an online assessment: Students have to interact with the assessment item as part of the solution strategy.
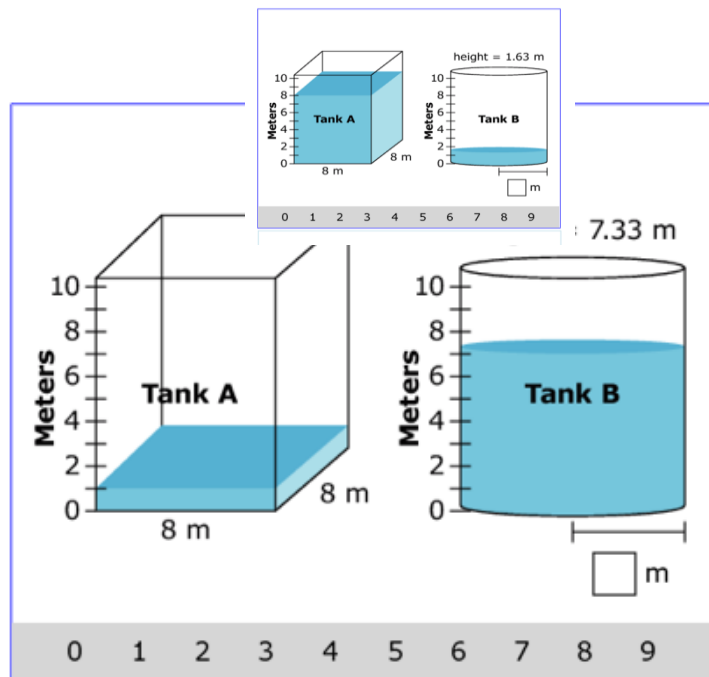
42968

Two water tanks are shown. Tank A is a rectangular prism and Tank B is a cylinder. The tanks are not drawn to scale.

Tank A is filled with water to the 10-meter mark.

Click Tank A to change the water level. The volume of water that leaves Tank A is transferred to Tank B, and the height of the water in Tank B is shown.

Drag one number into the box to show the approximate radius of the base of Tank B.

English Language Arts/Literacy – Multiple Choice Item (Grade 7)

The Common Core State Standards emphasize the use of gathering evidence from credible sources. This English language arts/literacy item is a research item that asks students to use reasoning and evaluation to assess the credibility of sources in order to select relevant information for a proposed report. The item was developed to mirror an authentic research process. The students are first given a research plan and results from an Internet search and then asked to choose which source would most likely have creditable and relevant information. The answer is "C."

2451

A student has made a plan for research. Read the plan and the directions that follow.

Research Report Plan

Topic: The Colony: The Most Organized of All Animal Social Groups

Audience: science students

Purpose: to inform

Research Question: How do colonies help animals adapt and survive?

The student needs to find a credible, or trustworthy, source with relevant information. Which source would **most likely** have credible and relevant information?

(A) www.biomebasics.net

Tour the world's biomes without leaving your chair! Explore deserts where termite colonies rise like pillars of sand. Swim oceans where coral reefs teem with life. Survey the vegetation and animal populations of grasslands, forests, and tundra. Can you identify the biomes closest to where you live? Which biomes do you think are the most . . .

(B) www.krazycolonies.com

Remember those ant farms you had when you were a kid? Well, THEY'RE BACK! Surprise your son or daughter with a colony of creepy-cute ants. From behind a crack-resistant wall of plastic, they'll see drones, soldiers, and that all-important queen, bustling about their buggy business. Only $15.99 and the shipping is free . . .

(C) www.animalinfozone.com

Why some animals live in colonies, and how this form of social organization is a key to their survival. In a paper by Dr. Stephen T. Cora, the author shares the work of biologists who have examined the social groups of ants, termites, bees, mole rats, and more . . .

(D) www.talkingaboutanimals.net

What is an animal colony? Jane Fuller answers questions about insects that live in highly organized social groupings. Her answers may fascinate you, especially her discussion of the term "eusocial" and . . .

EDUCATOR RESOURCES

Understanding the Smarter Balanced Assessments

Practice Test and Training Tests: The Practice and Training Tests are available to schools and districts for student orientation and preparation, professional development activities, and for discussions with parents, policymakers, and other interested stakeholders. The Practice and Training Tests are available at http://sbac.portal.airast.org/practice-test/.

- **Practice Tests**—Available since May 2013, the Smarter Balanced Practice Tests allow teachers, students, parents, and other interested parties to experience a full grade-level assessment. The Practice Tests include a variety of items (approximately 30 items each in ELA/literacy and math) as well as an ELA/literacy and math performance task at each grade level (3–8 and 11).
- **Training Tests**—The Training Tests were designed to provide students and teachers with opportunities to quickly familiarize themselves with the software and navigational tools used on the Smarter Balanced Field Test. The Training Test includes all new item types that were available on the Field Test organized by grade bands (grades 3 to 5, 6 to 8, and high school) and the full suite of accessibility and accommodations features that was available on the Field Test, including American Sign Language (ASL) videos for all listening items.

Training Modules: The Smarter Balanced Field Test Portal provides test preparation Training Modules for test administrators, teachers, and students available at: http://sbac.portal.airast.org/field-test/resources/. Although developed for the Field Test, these modules will be available for ongoing use. The modules include:
- *Let's Talk Universal Tools* acquaints students and teachers with the universal tools available on the test.
- The *Accessibility and Accommodations* training module outlines the recommended uses of designated supports, available universal tools, and accommodations for student accessibility to the assessments.

Understanding the Common Core
- **CoreStandards.org** – Created by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association, this is the official online home of the Common Core State Standards. This website includes information such as background on the development process, the key shifts, and the standards themselves.
- **CGCS Teacher Training Videos** – Videos developed by the Council of Great City Schools for central office and school-based staff and teachers as an introduction to the instructional shifts required by the CCSS.
    - English language arts and literacy: http://www.commoncoreworks.org/domain/127
    - Mathematics: http://www.commoncoreworks.org/Page/345
- **Khan Academy** – Khan Academy collaborated with Smarter Balanced, Illustrative Mathematics, and 40 educators to ensure the Common Core math materials are rigorous and fully aligned to the standards. The website includes a Common Core Map that allows teachers to explore problems related to each math standard at every grade level.
    - https://www.khanacademy.org/commoncore/map
- **Share My Lesson** – Website by the American Federation of Teachers and TES Connect that offers information about the CCSS and high-quality resources aligned to the standards.

- o http://www.sharemylesson.com/article.aspx?storyCode=50000148
- **Teaching Channel** – Website that offers a free library of high-quality videos featuring real teachers demonstrating their best educational practices with videos aligned to the CCSS.
  - o https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos?page=1&categories=organizations_national,topics_common-core&load=1
- **Common Core in Practice** – Series of videos by America Achieves that demonstrate effective instruction aligned to the CCSS.
  - o http://www.americaachieves.org/issues/common-core-in-practice-great-teachers-demonstrate-moving-to-deeper-learning
- **Student Achievement Partners** – Website that offers a variety of free, high-quality materials to help educators align their instruction to the Common Core.
  - o http://www.achievethecore.org/
- **EduCore** – Tool that was developed by ASCD and provides secondary teachers with high-quality teaching and learning resources aligned to the CCSS.
  - o http://educore.ascd.org/default.aspx
- **NEA Common Core State Standards Toolkit** – Toolkit designed to ensure members have the knowledge and understanding necessary to prepare for the implementation of CCSS.
  - o http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/EPP_CommonCore_Toolkit_Final.pdf

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

- **Council of the Great City Schools Three-Minute Videos**
  (http://www.commoncoreworks.org/domain/157)
  The Council of the Great City Schools developed a three-minute video—available in English and Spanish—that gives a brief introduction to the CCSS and explains how the standards will help students prepare for college and career. The style and accessible language make these videos well-suited for presentations to community and parent groups.

- **Council of the Great City Schools Parent Roadmaps for English Language Arts and Literacy and for Mathematics** (http://www.commoncoreworks.org/domain/114; http://www.commoncoreworks.org/domain/149)
  The Council of the Great City Schools developed parent roadmaps that provide grade-by-grade information for parents about the expectations of the CCSS, including examples of topics and content at each grade level and tips on supporting learning at home.

- **PTA Parents' Guide to Student Success**
  (http://pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583)
  The National PTA created guides in English and Spanish for grades K-12 to inform parents about the CCSS and support their children's success. The guides outline the key concepts that students should be learning in each grade in English language arts/literacy and mathematics, methods for building relationships with teachers, and tips for planning for college and career.

- **PTA State Assessment Guides**
  (http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3816)
  These state-by-state guides discuss how new assessments will measure the new standards and provide better information for parents and teachers about student progress. The guides explain the different types of assessments and include sample test questions.