



Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium work together to deliver the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments in Michigan schools.

The Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments are designed to enhance teaching and improve learning. They are optional and flexible tests given to students throughout the year to help teachers monitor student progress and personalize their learning experiences.

If you're familiar with the M-STEP, you'll be very comfortable using the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments. They are aligned to Michigan academic standards for English language arts/literacy and math, and include the same item types and tools as the M-STEP. The interim assessments also use the same online testing platform and administration portal as the M-STEP.

Schools that select the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments will also have access to the new Tools for Teachers—a website that features lessons and activities created by educators to save time, enhance instruction, and prepare students for college or a career.



The Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments are quick, flexible tools that help teachers check in on student progress throughout the year.

Features of the Interim Assessments:

- Provide flexible assessment options that vary in length and areas of focus to adapt to each teacher’s needs
- May be used to measure students’ knowledge and skills in grade levels other than the students’ enrolled grades
- Include rigorous items that cover the range college- and career-ready knowledge and skills in a set of common standards substantially similar to the Michigan State Standards in ELA/literacy and mathematics
- Allow educators access to view the test questions and their students’ responses as part of educators’ instructional process to address students’ relative strengths and needs for improvement

INTERIM ASSESSMENTS AT A GLANCE

Types of Interim Assessments

Smarter Balanced offers different types of interim assessments based on the granularity of the content they assess. Each type of assessment allows teachers to check student progress toward the mastery of skills measured in English language arts/literacy and mathematics.

Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs) measure similar content as the M-STEP assessment and may be helpful for determining the knowledge and skills of students who are new to the district or the state. ICAs can also provide information about students’ knowledge and skills after a significant period of instruction.

Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs) are assessments teachers can use throughout the school year to assess smaller bundles of content. They are intended to provide educators and students the ability to check where they are at that moment in time, and educators can use results to determine next steps for instruction. Since the IABs are more granular than the ICAs, educators can use IABs during the school year more consistently with the sequence of their curricula.

Focused IABs assess no more than three assessment targets to provide educators with a more detailed understanding of student learning.

Each IAB and Focused IAB is associated with a Connections Playlist that supports teachers in determining instructional next steps to help students based on their performance on the assessment. The playlists include links to instructional resources in Tools for Teachers that support the formative assessment process by providing tools, resources, and instructional strategies to use in the classroom.

The ICAs, IABs, and Focused IABs draw from the same bank of items and performance tasks.

Interim Comprehensive Assessments



Assess the full range of targets, similar to the summative.

Examples:

- Grade 3 ELA
- Grade 3 Math

Interim Assessment Blocks



Assess 3–8 targets in Math or ELA/literacy.

Examples:

- Grade 3 ELA, Reading Literary Texts
- Grade 3 Math, Operations and Algebraic Thinking




Focused Interim Assessment Blocks



Assess 1–3 targets in Math or ELA/literacy.

Examples:

- Grade 3 ELA, Text Analysis (Literary)
- Grade 3 Math: Multiply and Divide Within 100

	 Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs)	 Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs)	 Focused Interim Assessment Blocks (FIABs)
What they measure	ICAs measure a similar range of content as the summative assessments and assess similar claims, targets, and standards.	IABs assess 3–8 targets.	Focused IABs assess 1–3 targets.
Test format	ICAs are fixed-form tests.	IABs are fixed-form tests.	Focused IABs are fixed-form tests.
Kinds of test items	ICAs include the same item types and formats, including performance tasks, as the summative assessments.	IABs include the same item types and formats, including performance tasks, as the summative assessments.	Focused IABs include the same item types and formats as the summative assessments.
Reporting results	ICAs yield overall scale scores (on the same vertical scale), overall performance level designations, and claim-level information as the summative assessments. Claim-level information results are reported as “Below Standard,” “At/Near Standard,” and “Above Standard.”	Results are reported as “Below Standard,” “At/Near Standard,” and “Above Standard.”	Results are reported as “Below Standard,” “At/Near Standard,” and “Above Standard.”
Resources for next steps	Educators can search Tools for Teachers for relevant resources by filtering for a given grade level, subject, and claim.	Each IAB is associated with a Connections Playlist that supports teachers by describing actions they may take to help their students based on their performance on the assessment. Playlists include links to instructional resources in Tools for Teachers that support the formative assessment process by providing tools, resources, and instructional strategies.	Each Focused IAB is associated with a Connections Playlist that supports teachers by describing actions they may take to help their students based on their performance on the assessment. Playlists include links to instructional resources in Tools for Teachers that support the formative assessment process by providing tools, resources, and instructional strategies.



TESTING IS OFFERED FOR TWO DISTINCT SETTINGS:

In Person—Students are regularly scheduled onsite in schools for any given amount of time or schedule for regular instruction.

Remote/Virtual—Students are receiving instruction virtually most, if not all, of the time and are unable to return to schools for assessments.

The Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments are administered online using the DRC INSIGHT™ Online Learning System, which is the same software used for the M-STEP summative assessments. Teachers have the flexibility to re-administer interim assessments any number of times.

Using Interim Assessments

The Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments can serve a variety of educator needs. Educators may establish the timeframe and administration policies for interim assessments.

Administration

Delivering the interim assessments in the DRC INSIGHT online engine offers a number of important benefits to Michigan. Students, teachers, and technology coordinators are already familiar with the DRC INSIGHT platform. Using the same platform eliminates the need to download and learn new software, saving time and additional burden for local districts. In addition, the DRC INSIGHT system offers an extensive list of accessibility tools and accommodations that have been built over a long period of time based upon the research and input of practitioners, many of whom have been Michigan educators.

The interim assessments are considered non-secure and non-public. The non-secure designation provides educators the flexibility to access the questions and their students' responses to the questions. The non-public designation prohibits posting the interim assessments publicly, allowing educators to use the interim assessments as a standardized assessment if they choose to do so. However, interim assessments are not intended to be used for accountability purposes.

Reporting

Following the administration and scoring of the interim assessments, results will be available in the Smarter Balanced Reporting System. The Smarter Balanced Reporting System is an interactive, online reporting platform that provides clear, easy-to-understand data on student achievement and delivers intuitive and timely reports for teachers, parents, and administrators to track student progress toward college and career readiness. Educators can view results from the interim assessments at the group, student, and item level to help identify what students know and can do and where they might need additional support to master the content. Users with the required permissions may also view, download, and print individual student reports.



New: Tools for Teachers

Michigan teachers will have access to the new Smarter Balanced Tools for Teachers—a collection of lessons and activities created by educators to save time, enhance instruction, and prepare students for college or a career. Tools for Teachers helps teachers identify where students are in their learning, where they are going, and how they will get there. In addition, the website was developed with a commitment to accessibility, making it easy for educators to find the strategies that support diverse learners.



Features include:

- interactive Connections Playlists educators can use with interim assessments,
- high-quality resources aligned to learning standards,
- formative assessment strategies embedded in every resource, and
- accessibility instructional strategies.

Every instructional resource includes learning goals and success criteria to help educators support their students. Smarter Balanced also has resources for teachers on how to best use these tools for distance learning.

Ready to get started with the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments?

All Michigan districts and schools have been provided permissions to the Smarter Balanced Interims in the DRC INSIGHT Portal. These users can add additional users and teachers at their sites. This will also provide access to Tools for Teachers.



Learn more about the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments at
<https://smarterbalanced.org/our-system/assessments/>.