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SAT TO REPLACE SMARTER IN 11TH GRADE

The SAT will replace the Smarter Assessment as the state test for high school juniors beginning this spring.

The change comes at the request of legislators and as the state continues to look for ways to reduce testing, particularly for 11th graders who already were taking both exams as part of Delaware's state-funded School Day SAT program.

The College Board, the nonprofit that administers the college entrance exam, is launching a [redesigned SAT](#) this spring that is aligned to the [Common Core State Standards](#), the academic expectations for what Delaware students should know and be able to do at the completion of each grade level. The changes to the SAT also include a move away from obscure "SAT vocabulary words" to the use of relevant vocabulary words in context, an in-depth focus on essential areas of math and the elimination of the guessing penalty.

"Our students deserve an exam that helps them gauge their college and career readiness, and our teachers deserve an exam that provides them with the information they need to guide their instruction. This is one example of how we are reducing the testing burden on our students and teachers," Secretary of Education Steven Godowsky said. "This is a smart solution that ensures our educators, students and families get the information they need while mitigating the over-testing concern many share.

The state will continue to administer the [Smarter Assessment](#) in grades 3 to 8.

Delaware has been administering a school-day SAT to all public school juniors at no cost to students since 2011. Godowsky said making the transition to use the SAT as the accountability test this year is based on the feedback of elected leaders, educators and families. Last week, 10 legislators sent a letter to Gov. Jack Markell asking to replace the 11th grade Smarter exam with the SAT.

"Our community was clear that this was in the best interest of our high school juniors and the sooner we could make the switch the better," Godowsky said. "This decision is in response to that feedback."

Gov. Jack Markell, who [launched a statewide assessment inventory](#) process last spring, said, "We believe that the concerns about the testing burden on our juniors are well founded. We also agree that this move is a smart, commonsense way to reduce the testing burden significantly without sacrificing our ability to understand whether we are serving our students well and whether they are making the progress they need to be successful. I have asked Secretary Godowsky to immediately designate the SAT as our 11th grade assessment and take all necessary steps to implement the change so that, beginning this year, juniors will no longer take Smarter Balanced. The department will

seek federal approval for this change in our state assessment as quickly as possible and otherwise ensure that the transition goes smoothly in schools across the state.”

Under Delaware’s former state test, the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS), 9th and 10th graders were tested. When the state moved to Smarter in Spring 2015, 11th grade became the singular testing year for high school. But many said that proved overwhelming for juniors, who also take Advanced Placement exams, the SAT, SAT subject tests, the ACT and other tests during their 11th grade year.

New Castle County Vo-Tech Superintendent Vicki Gehrt, president of the Delaware Chief School Officers Association, said superintendents in the state are in support of substituting the SAT in lieu of the Smarter Assessment as the required assessment for high school students. This shift both gives teachers more time to provide necessary instruction and eases the load on our high school students with respect to the annual assessments they already must take.

State Board of Education President Dr. Teri Quinn Gray said students and families value the SAT.

“The redesigned SAT provides important information students, parents and educators want and need to understand students’ college, career and civic readiness. For that reason, it is already valued by parents and students. In addition, by using this test as the high school assessment for English language arts and math, we will reduce the amount of required testing and costs to the state,” Gray said.

Last spring, the General Assembly passed and Governor Markell signed into law Senate Joint Resolution 2, requiring an inventory and review of all assessments currently administered at the state, district and school level “with the goal of decreasing the testing burden on students and teachers and increasing time available for teaching.”

This work continues. Districts and charter schools, which were eligible for supporting state grants, submitted their assessment inventories, recommendations, and impact information to the state at the end of December. The department has convened an assessment inventory committee with representatives from the House and Senate education committees, Delaware State Education Association, state superintendents, civil rights community and parents to make recommendations. The state’s final report must be published by June 2016.

Sen. David Sokola, chair of the Senate Education Committee, and Rep. Earl Jaques, chair of the House Education Committee, lauded today’s announcement.

“This is the kind of change legislators were seeking when we approved SJR 2 to create a task force to fully review our student testing,” Sokola said. “This is a good first step toward removing burdens on our students and increasing instruction time for teachers, while also providing them with the important metrics needed to gauge student progress.”

Jaques agreed, “This decision eliminates duplicative testing and reduces over-testing while helping to ease student stress and parental concerns.”

The department has posted information and will continue updating its [website](#) with information, including [resources](#) for districts/charters and the public, regularly. Educators or families with questions may email assessment@doe.k12.de.us or call (302) 857-3391.

As students prepare for the spring SAT, they also have some extra help this year. A partnership with Khan Academy and the College Board offers [personalized SAT preparation](#) based on students’ PSAT results. Delaware also provides the PSAT free to all public school 10th graders.