

## **Student Support for Smarter Balanced Assessments**

*The goal of Smarter Balanced assessments is that (1) all students have a positive and productive testing experience and (2) the results provide a fair and accurate picture of each student's academic achievement. To meet that goal, every student must have access to appropriate support when needed during testing. For Smarter Balanced, three levels of assistance are provided: Universal Tools, Designated Supports, and Accommodations.*

### **What are the differences between these levels of support?**

Universal tools are features that all students can use, based on a student's preference and need. A few examples of universal tools are increasing the size of the print, highlighting or strikethrough words in questions, or using a calculator for specific questions.

Designated supports are available to any student (including English learners and students with disabilities) for whom the need has been noted by the student's teacher and/or school support staff. This could include input from parents or guardians and the student as appropriate. A few examples of designated supports are a bilingual dictionary, changing the color of the text and background, or text-to-speech, which is having the text read to them by the computer (all mathematics and English–language arts questions are available in text-to-speech).

Accommodations are changes in the process or materials that increase access for identified students during testing, allowing these students the opportunity to show what they know and can do. The *Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines* developed for Smarter Balanced are located on the California Department of Education Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/access.asp> and highlight accommodations for students who have a documented need on their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Plan. A few examples of accommodations are the availability for test in Braille or American Sign Language, text-to-speech, closed caption, as well as all tools for universal and designated supports.

Universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations may be within the testing system or provided locally by the school when the test is being administered to the student.

## Which students should use each level of support?

Universal tools are available to all students, including those students receiving designated supports and/or accommodations. Designated supports are available only to students for whom an adult or team has indicated the need and has been documented. Accommodations are available only to those students for whom the need is documented on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan. Students who have IEPs or 504 Plans also may use designated supports and universal tools. The use of the three levels of support by student group is presented below.

	All Students	English learners	Students with disabilities
Universal Tools	✓	✓	✓
Designated Supports	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓ <sup>1</sup>	✓
Accommodations			✓

<sup>1</sup>Only for instances that an adult (or team) has deemed the supports appropriate for a specific student's testing needs.

Contact your child's teacher(s) or the school office during regular school hours if you have questions about the CAASPP or the supports provided to students participating in the Smarter Balanced assessments.

### More to Come...

This is the third in a series of information fact sheets for parents and guardians, which focuses on the support features made available to students who need assistance during Smarter Balanced testing. The fourth and final fact sheet will spotlight the reporting and use of the spring 2014 CAASPP results with a future look at 2015.