

Please accept this document as the position statement from School Administrators of Iowa, a professional association representing more than 1,800 superintendents, central office administrators and principals throughout the state, regarding the upcoming decision in choosing Iowa's statewide assessment.

It is our position that the State Board of Education should accept the recommendation of the Iowa Assessment Task Force to adopt Smarter Balanced as the statewide assessment.

In the fall of 2013, through an initiative called SAI Executive Leaders, over 190 of Iowa's superintendents and AEA chief administrators met and focused on the issue of a statewide assessment system. Through a collaborative process a consensus was reached that a statewide assessment system must: 1) Align with the Iowa Core, 2) Measure individual student growth, 3) Provide valid and reliable data, 4) Contain timely feedback mechanisms, and 5) Be purpose driven.

Additionally, these educational leaders felt that the Iowa Department of Education should provide the leadership in choosing an assessment that meets all of those criteria, that the chosen assessment should not add additional expense to districts, that the assessment must not unduly interfere with instructional time, and that attention must be paid to the technology resources needed to implement the assessment.

In 2013, the Assessment Task Force was charged by the General Assembly to study the state's assessment needs and recommend a new state assessment. Individuals on that group spent 14 months studying the issue to identify the best assessment available to measure student growth and voted 20-1 to select Smarter Balanced. This group of 21 individuals representing business, parents, school districts and education organizations extensively reviewed assessments proposed by vendors and overwhelmingly selected Smarter Balanced on its ability to meet the identified criteria. In evaluating the assessment options, all were considered based on fairness, availability, accuracy in describing student achievement, validity, reliability, pilot tests in Iowa, alignment, measures college/career readiness, and provision of technical support.

Additionally, Smarter Balanced will help school leaders and classroom teachers further recognize students' level of understanding by adapting the difficulty of questions based on how students answer previous questions. This customization provides additional opportunities to individualize the education of our students. We are able to assist students who need help in certain areas of study and further challenge students who show a high aptitude in specific areas.

Therefore, it is SAI's view that the requests and stipulations outlined by the SAI Executive Leaders group closely mirror the decision-making criteria of the Assessment Task Force, which is why as an organization we support the Task Force recommendation to endorse Smarter Balanced.

Assessments are an important tool that school leaders and classroom teachers use in making decisions for improving Iowa students' education. It is vital that the tests are aligned with what is actually being taught. Therefore, we ask the State Board to accept the recommendation of the Assessment Task Force to adopt Smarter Balanced which will assist Iowa teachers and administrators to best meet the educational needs of our students.