



AIR – Smarter Balanced Assessment – Common Core Connections
Compiled by Karen R. Effrem, MD – Executive Director of the Florida Stop Common Core Coalition

This document will show the significant connections between the American Institutes for Research (AIR), the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), and the Common Core Standards for the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) and the End of Course (EOC) exams as described in the full AIR contract with the State of Florida. (Page numbers are from the full contract as downloaded from the Florida CFO website on 6/14/15 and available at this link: <http://www.flstopccoalition.org/files/BB09FFB4-4E6B-4B95-9571-F3615CCF963B--C24D3DE8-164F-478E-93CE-8D73059564B4/full-air-contract-cn-480000-14652.pdf?lc=09092015114806> (All Emphasis is added).

The Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) will yield the data on which Florida’s reforms rely. These policy uses are high stakes, and require timely data. ***Florida seeks common core tests that have been field-tested and are ready for operational administration by spring 2015.*** Florida cannot afford to risk not having an assessment system in place that will serve these purposes. ***The assessment must measure the full breadth and depth of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), ensuring full and accurate measurement of the intended curriculum for each student.*** (p. 498)

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Our proposed solution offers Florida two different options for the baseline, first-year test, with the two options differentiated by cost, testing time, and the types of measurement used. Both options offer flexibility for the test to evolve at Florida’s discretion over time. The two options for the baseline, first-year test include

- the Student Assessment of Growth and Excellence (SAGE); and
- the ***Smarter Balanced Assessment (Smarter Balanced).***

SAGE was developed in partnership with the state of Utah to measure the full breadth and depth of the CCSS. Smarter Balanced was developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. Both item banks were designed to support adaptive assessments, and therefore offer broad and robust pools from which to select fixed forms. The two options differ in cost, testing, and turnaround time and both will be fully field-tested and calibrated in spring 2014. The terms of use of each test allow Florida to enhance them with Florida items, to modify the blueprints even the first year, and to select fixed-form tests. (pp. 498-99)

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Cumulatively, our approach provides Florida a robust, calibrated common core item bank from which to build first-year forms. It provides national and international benchmarks, and standard setting, psychometric, and validity studies that will support the high-stakes uses for which the FSA is destined. We offer well-proven systems that use technology to improve measurement, enhance quality, and speed results. (p. 499)

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We are pleased to be able to offer a mature solution. AIR has been delivering adaptive and fixed-form online tests for 7 years. In addition to millions of operational tests in Oregon, Delaware, Hawaii, Minnesota, and Ohio, ***our online testing system recently delivered the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium’s pilot test to over half a million students across 21 states. This spring, we will serve approximately 5 million Smarter Balanced students.*** (p. 500)

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For this project we have teamed with Data Recognition Corporation (DRC). Our solid partnership with DRC extends across many states, including the ***Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium***. Among the very few organizations that have the test processing capacity to serve Florida on the required timelines, only DRC has achieved ISO 9001:2008 certification, ensuring that their processes are replicable and reliably followed. DRC brings 30 years of experience, and has successfully processed and hand-scored millions of tests for large-scale statewide assessments, including Alabama, Alaska, Louisiana, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Washington. (p. 501)
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Sandra Durden, our proposed project manager for test development, has more than 20 years of experience in the field of education, including 10 years in the assessment industry and 10 years as a K–8 educator. At AIR, she is working on ***performance tasks for the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium*** and item development for state programs and K–2 formative assessments. (p. 501)
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Stacy Tsakeris will serve as project manager, computer-based testing. Ms. Tsakeris is managing the quality control for the ***Smarter Balanced field testing*** in 24 states and ***managing the test content documentation of the Open Source software that will be available to the Smarter Balanced states***. (pp, 501-502)
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We offer Florida the choice between two large, common core item banks, each of which is field-tested and delivered in our system. That system is designed to work within the constraints of real school environments. We find nearly a million computers in Florida that meet our system’s requirements—triple the number that meet the requirements outlined in the ITN. (p. 502)
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In addition to developing customized statewide assessments beginning with the first California State High School Exit Exam in the 1990s, ***AIR is a leader in developing assessments to measure the full breadth and depth of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that underlie the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA). These efforts include the Student Assessment of Growth and Excellence (SAGE) developed in partnership with the state of Utah and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced).*** For both of these efforts, AIR’s test development staff and technologies led the development of the vast majority of technology enhanced items. For Smarter Balanced, AIR also developed a full set of open-source scoring engines. We bring experience with traditional and technology-based items for standards-based assessment using evidence-centered design, permissioned and commissioned stimuli, and a unique understanding of the nature of building an item bank for testing, items for standards-based assessment using, evidence-centered design, permissioned and commissioned stimuli, and a unique understanding of the nature of building an item bank for testing. (p. 505)

For the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, we successfully delivered the testing system for the 2013 pilot test for more than 800,000 students in 23 states and will deliver more than 15 million tests during a single Field Test window in spring 2014, including 95% of the students in California. (p. 505)
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Florida seeks Common Core tests that have been field-tested and are ready for operational administration by Spring 2015. Given the centrality of Florida’s assessment program to the state’s accountability system and approach to continuous improvement, the Department must have an assessment system in place that will serve these purposes. The assessment must measure the full breadth and depth of the Common Core State Standards, ensuring full and accurate measurement of the intended curriculum for each student. (p. 553)
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Both options offer Florida the required flexibility. ***Either assessment can be administered as is (as an adaptive assessment), or exploited as a fully field-tested and calibrated Common Core item pool.*** If the assessment is

treated as an item pool, Florida can design its own blueprints and select items from the pools to support creating FSA fixed forms. (p. 554).

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As Florida transitions to the FSA, the assessment must prove a sufficiently rigorous measure of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that a high school diploma is meaningful to graduates, employers, and postsecondary institutions. Potential graduates will need assessment results before the end of the school year and the results must be ***reflective of 21st century skills.*** (p. 557).

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In 2010, Florida adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA/L) and Mathematics. Florida seeks an assessment that will provide an accurate and meaningful measurement of student mastery in those standards without significantly increasing the testing time beyond that of the current state assessments. (p. 590)

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Whether the Department chooses to begin with the SAGE item bank or the Smarter Balanced item bank, ***we recommend that the FSA be linked to the Smarter Balanced scale to facilitate cross-state comparisons.*** If the FSA begins with the Smarter Balanced assessment, the linkage will occur naturally. ***If the FSA begins with SAGE, the Department can license the Smarter Balanced bank for a small number of students (approximately 3,000–4,000 per grade) and intersperse a small number (approximately 6–8) of items per students in embedded field-test slots to link to the Smarter Balanced scale.*** (p. 590)

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The SAGE ELA/L assessment is designed to take approximately 90 minutes, which is significantly shorter than the 160-minute testing time proposed in Appendix D of the ITN. ***The test comprises Reading, Listening, and Language items, which assess the full range of content standards in the Common Core. The Reading portion contains both single and paired passages, with a range of informational and literary genres that reflect the ratio established by the Common Core*** (i.e., progressively more informational passages in the upper grades). Listening items are based on short auditory stimuli. Editing items give students the opportunity to edit short draft passages by correcting errors in context. (pp. 590-591)

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Consistent with Common Core’s evidence based approach to writing, the SAGE writing test provides students with a series of short stimuli around a common theme or topic. These are used as a springboard for an authentic writing performance task. (p. 591)

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Our proposal offers Florida the choice between two exceptional Common Core tests, with a plan to link either to the Smarter Balanced scale. The Smarter Balanced test specifications are public and well publicized, so here we focus on describing the SAGE test content. (pp. 590-591)

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The item banks that AIR has developed for SAGE are comprised of items that align to these Common Core standards, assess higher order thinking skills, and follow the item and passage specifications that are described below. Our development of SAGE has provided opportunities to continue refining new item types that are specifically designed to meet the rigorous cognitive demands of the Common Core. (p. 593)

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In addition to passage specifications, our content experts developed item specifications to guide the SAGE item development process. ***Writers used these specifications while developing SAGE items to ensure a solid alignment with the Common Core standards and to make the best use of our item types.*** (p. 596)

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Developing more than 10,000 items annually, our test development staff has been developing and aligning existing items to Common Core State Standards since their inception. (p. 934)