

April 3, 2014

Dear Members of the Missouri General Assembly:

Recently, Missouri schools began administering the Field Test of the questions that could be part of the updated Missouri Assessment Program. More than 22 states are participating in this practice run of the assessments this spring. Information from the Field Test will be used to ensure that test questions are valid and reliable for all students and are without bias. Field testing is the same process that was used for Missouri's previous updates of the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP).

The Field Test includes the same types of items and performance tasks that students will experience in the 2014-2015 school year. Administered online, the test platform provides a full suite of accessibility tools for all students and accommodations—such as Braille—to ensure that students with special needs can participate.

To help schools get ready for the Field Test, online practice tests have been available to schools, students, and families since May 2013 with sample test questions for grades 3–8 and 11 in both English language arts and mathematics. In January, training tests were posted with additional item types and accessibility and accommodation features. To access the practice and training tests, visit: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>.

A group of states created the shared assessment for English language arts and mathematics that are aligned with the Missouri Learning Standards. In 2014-2015, Missouri's test vendor CTB/McGraw-Hill will administer the updated assessments.

The new assessments will truly support high-quality teaching and learning. They will give teachers and parents more accurate information about whether students are on track. We are moving to a system that asks students to think critically and apply their knowledge in real-world applications. That means they will be better prepared not only for additional education and training after high school graduation, but also for life.

If you have additional questions about the field testing, please e-mail: [assessment@dese.mo.gov](mailto:assessment@dese.mo.gov). You can also visit [www.MissouriLearningStandards.com](http://www.MissouriLearningStandards.com) for more information.

Sincerely,



Chris L. Nicastro  
Commissioner of Education