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# Standardized Testing: THEN ... and NOW

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November 17, 2014

# Presentation Outline

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- **THEN**
- **NOW**
- **SAMPLE TASKS**
- **A FEW TAKE-AWAYS**

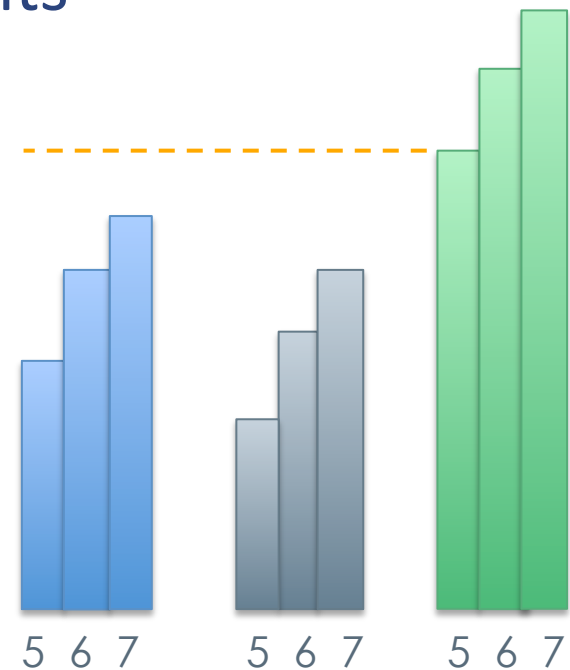
# THEN: State Tests a Mixed Bag

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- Each state developed its own standards and contracted for its own assessments\*
- Huge variability found in the rigor of the standards – as much as 3 to 4 grade levels in some cases†

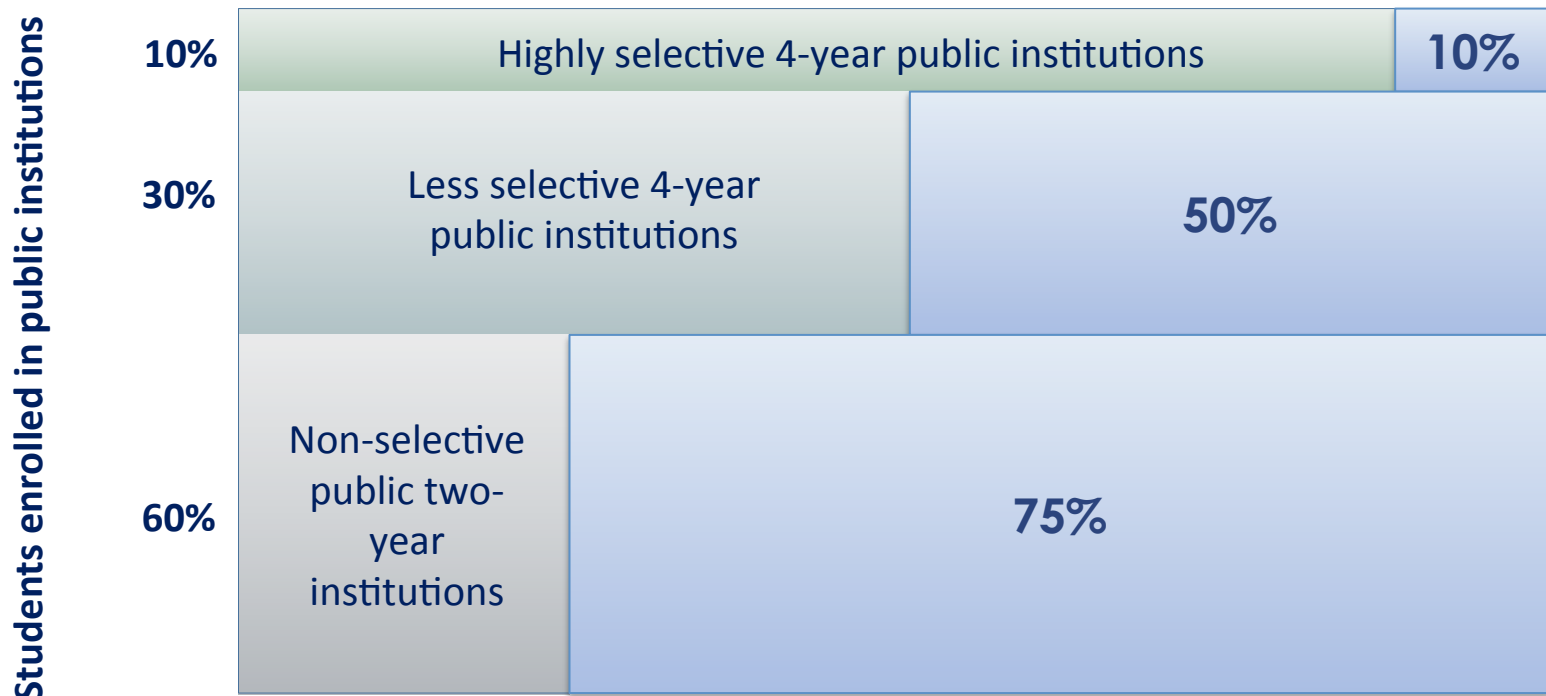
\* Exception: Several new England states developed common assessments.

† Gary W. Phillips, "International Benchmarking: State and National Education Performance Standards." American Institutes of Research, 2014.



# Pressures for Change: Concern About High Remediation Rates

Percent of Freshmen Not Ready for Credit-Bearing Coursework in Math and English



"Beyond the Rhetoric: Improving College Readiness Through Coherent State Policy. Southern Regional Education Board, June 2010.

# Pressures for Change: Concern About High Remediation Rates

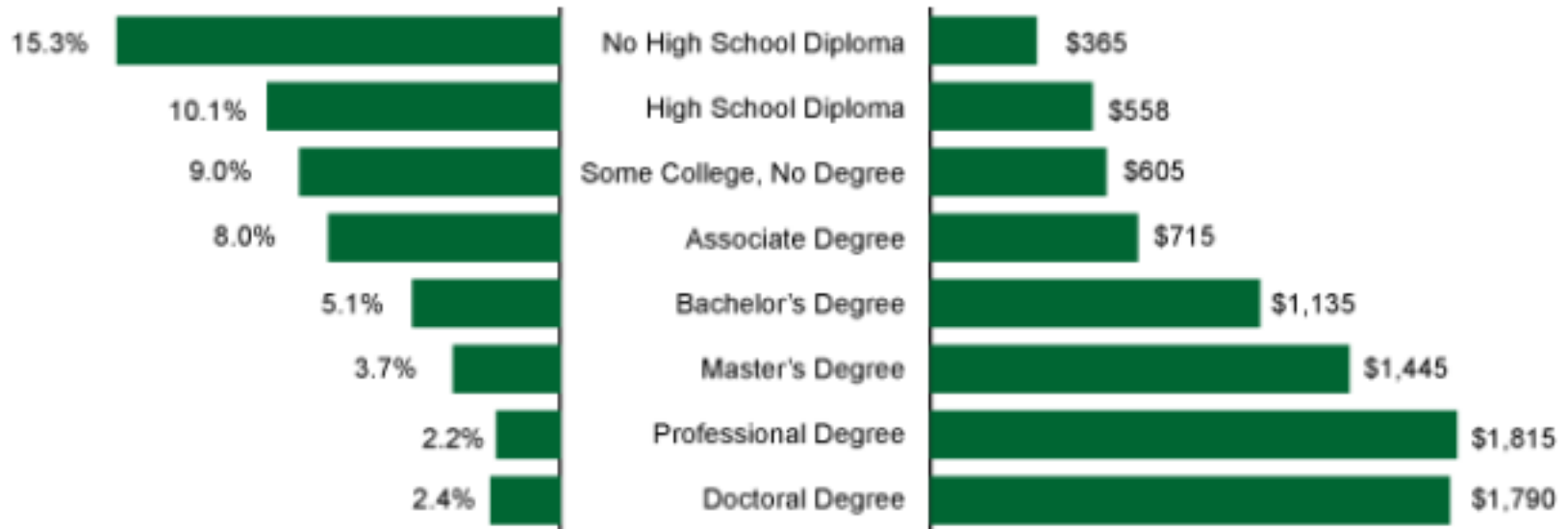
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*In total, approximately 60% of all students entering higher education—who had earned high school diplomas—required some remedial instruction.*

# Pressures for Change: Concern About Unemployment

Unemployment rates for workers  
age 25 and older, October 2010

Median weekly earnings, 2009



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

# Pressures for Change: Testing the Right Stuff?

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- Colleges and career training programs reported weaknesses in HS grads
  - Reading complex technical and informational texts
  - Writing well-supported arguments
  - Solving non-routine problems
- Meta-analyses of college and workforce skills pointed to critical higher order skills
  - Problem solving
  - Critical thinking
  - Systems thinking
  - Information/ ICT literacy

# Pressures for Change: Testing the Right Stuff?

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Webb's Depth of Knowledge levels are commonly used to classify skills and knowledge, with DOK 3 and 4 considered "higher order thinking skills."

<b>DOK Level 4</b>	<b>Extended Thinking:</b> Application, research, modeling, problem solving
<b>DOK Level 3</b>	<b>Strategic Thinking:</b> Assess, compare, evaluate, hypothesize
<b>DOK Level 2</b>	<b>Conceptual and Procedural Knowledge</b> Classify, organize, summarize, infer
<b>DOK Level 1</b>	<b>Basic skills:</b> Memorize, list, identify, tell

Webb, N.L. 2002



# Pressures for Change: Testing the Right Stuff?

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- The tests focused too heavily on lower level, foundational skills and knowledge
  - An analysis by RAND of assessments from 17 states reputed to have higher standards and more ambitious assessments found that:
    - Only **21% of ELA items** required “higher order thinking skills” and
    - Fewer than **2% of mathematics items** required “higher order thinking skills”\*

\* Estimating the percentage of students who were tested on cognitively demanding items through the state achievement tests. RAND Corporation, 2012

# NOW: Will the new tests do a better job?

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- On track to be much more challenging
  - Each includes several extended reading passages, requires writing using evidence from sources, and requires solving of complex, multi-step problems
  - CRESST 2013 review of PARCC and Smarter Balanced “assessment targets” found:
    - 68% of ELA/literacy targets and *(RAND: 21%)*
    - 70% of mathematics targets *(RAND: under 2%)*

call for items to be at DOK 3 or 4.

\* On the road to assessing deeper learning: The status of Smarter Balanced and PARCC assessment consortia. Herman, J.L. and R.L. Linn, 2013

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# Sample Items and Tasks

# A Few Take-Aways

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## 1. The tests will be significantly better measures of important skills and knowledge than most earlier state assessments

- Evidence centered design allows for richer tasks and better-supported claims about student knowledge and skills
  - Multiple-choice items are still appropriate for some skills and knowledge, and will still be used
- We'll see more items at higher DOK levels and complex, multi-part tasks
- We'll see more challenging reading and writing tasks that better reflect postsecondary demands

# A Few Take-Aways

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## 2. There are many challenges still ahead.

- **ACCEPTANCE AND VERIFICATION**

- Will parents and teachers accept them as credible measures of what their students know and can do?
- Will the test results predict success in credit-bearing entry level postsecondary courses?

- **POLITICAL PRESSURES**

- These new tests and performance standards are much tougher than most of their predecessors, and require much more testing time. Will state legislators and policymakers stay the course, or will states pull out of consortia and set lower standards?

- **COSTS**

- Will schools be ready to deliver the online assessments, and can they maintain the needed technology infrastructure?
- Development of these complex items/tasks is more expensive than earlier processes. Can states/consortia sustain use of them?

# A Few Take-Aways

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## 3. The potential up-side is also big.

- The education market has enlarged and is predominantly focused on one set of academic standards, which should lead to higher quality instructional and assessment resources and more nuanced variants for different types of learners
- Pace of assessment innovation may increase, given the scale of consortia and digital platforms, leading to more accurate, timely, and useful information back to students and educators
- Real-time digital sharing of “best” resources for students and for educators, through online libraries, may expedite improvements in student learning

# Where to Find Full-Length Practice Tests

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*Be sure to check that you are using one of the supported operating systems and browsers.*

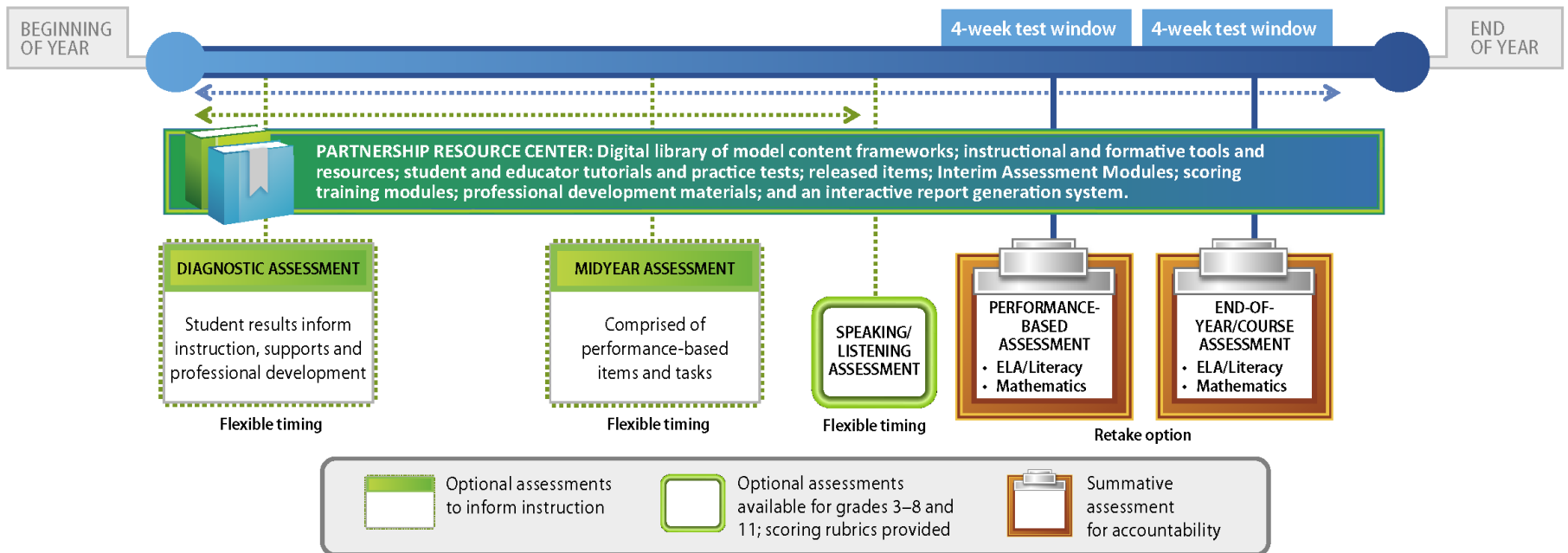
## **PARCC:**

<http://parconline.org/practice-tests>

**Smarter Balanced:** <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>

# PARCC Model

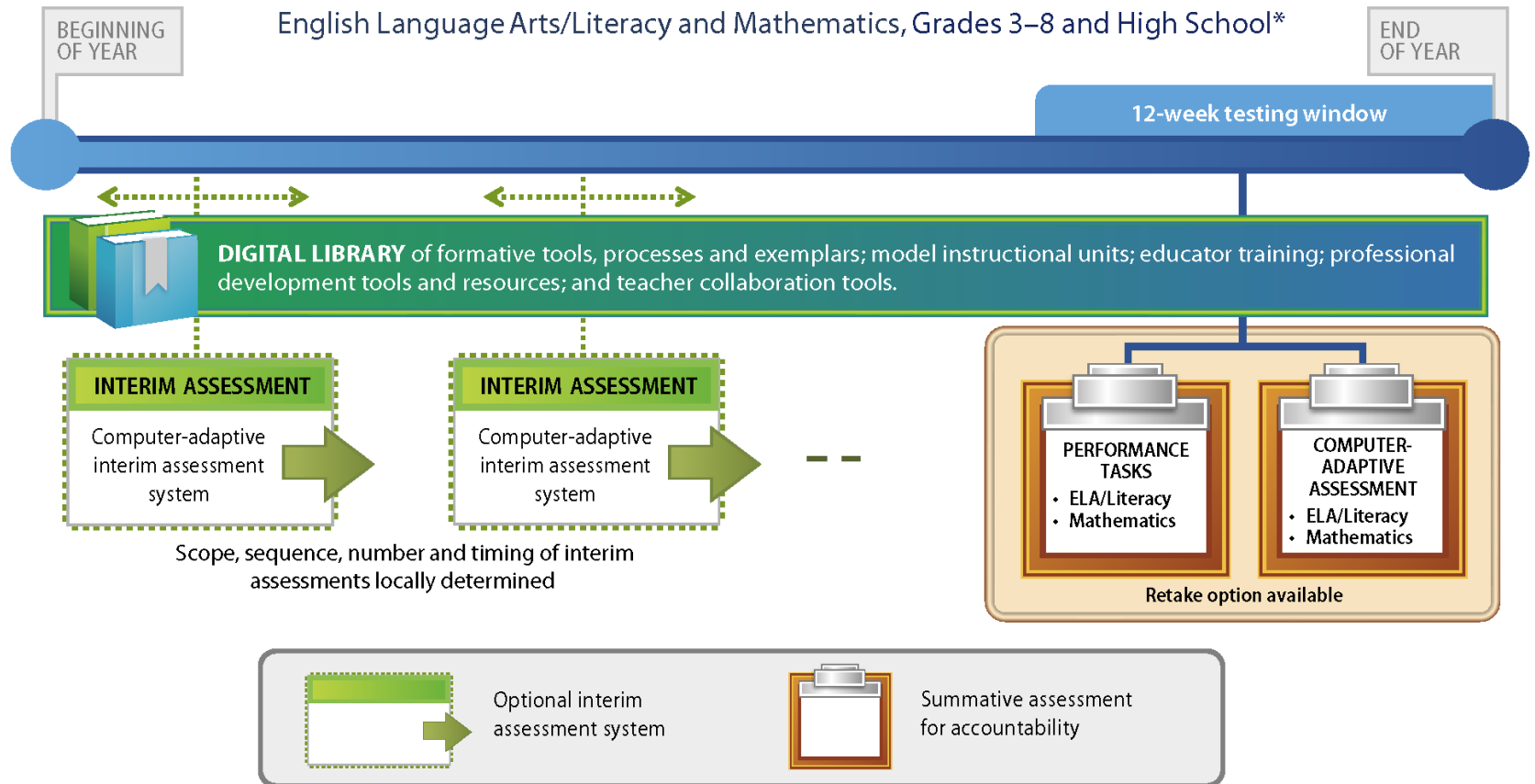
English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics, Grades 3–8 and High School



Graphic by the K-12 Center at ETS, November 2014



# Smarter Model



\*Summative and interim assessments for grades 3–8 and 11, with ability for states to create additional assessments for grades 9, 10, and 12.