**I heard the new MEA is a computer test. Tell me more about this**...

• The new MEA is a computer test, but it’s an adaptive test. It builds the best test for each

student by selecting questions that are based on our academic standards and match the

student performance. If a student gets a question right, then she will get a similar, but

harder question next. If a student gets a question wrong, then she will get a similar, but

easier question next. This information will help the teachers, instructional coaches, and

administrators personalize and improve instruction and classroom activities for all students.

**Is this test longer than the NECAP? How is it different? Tell me more about time...**

• The new MEA is incredibly flexible with regards to time. Previous assessments, like the

NECAP, required students to test in 90-minute sessions, and those sessions were only

open for a 3-week window. The SAT, the former Maine High School Assessment (MHSA),

was only previously accessible on a Saturday, and would be a 5-6 hour session with only a

5-minute break, here and there. The new MEA sessions can be broken into smaller, 50-60

minute sessions, with a break of up to 20-minutes in the middle, and can be open for 45

days. If some students need shorter testing sessions; the new MEA can accommodate

that need. This is another great benefit the new MEA has for helping identify student

learning strengths and weaknesses.

• The new MEA also is broken into two portions: the Computer Adaptive test (see above),

and the Performance Task. The Performance Task asks students to think critically about a

problem, and answer questions/solve problems using critical thinking skills as well as

content knowledge. This is a big difference from previous tests, like the NECAP or SAT,

that were heavily based only in content knowledge. These skills are crucially important, as

the use of the content far outweighs simply having it. Having these multiple ways to show

student learning and achievement will be greatly beneficial in improving our learning

environments for all students.

**What academic areas are being tested in the new MEA?**

• The computer-portion of the new MEA is only focused on English/Language Arts and

Mathematics. There will also be a Science MEA that will also take place in May, but that

assessment will be a “traditional paper-pencil” version.

**I heard that this assessment is really hard. How accurate is this?**

• Is this assessment harder than previous assessments? In short: no. Due to the adaptive

nature of this assessment, teachers, students, and parents will be able to get a more

accurate understanding of student achievement and growth, compared to previous

assessments that did not adjust to student’s getting questions right or wrong. This

assessment isn’t harder; the program will determine the correct level of question/ability that

each individual student can perform at, and that information will be provided to the

students, parents, and teachers to help collaboratively design and implement a

personalized instruction and learning plan for all kids. This ELA/Math assessment isn’t

“harder” than previous assessment, but, at times, it will be “hard.” It will challenge each

student, and ask students difficult questions, to determine some truly critical information:

what the student knows, and what the student doesn’t know. If you’re interested in

viewing/taking a student practice test, visit: <http://me.portal.airast.org/training-tests/>

**I keep hearing about a “Smarter Balanced” assessment. Tell me more about this...**

• The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium ([www.smarterbalanced.org](http://www.smarterbalanced.org)) includes 22

member U.S. States & territories. Maine is one of the Governing Members of the

consortium. This state-led consortium has been working collaboratively to develop

assessments aligned to academic standards in English/Language Arts and Mathematics,

(including the Maine Learning Results). The “Smarter Balanced” portion of the new MEA is

focused only on two content areas: English/Language Arts and Mathematics. The Science

MEA is not a part of the Smarter Balanced assessment.

**What is the value for students in participating in the new MEA? (via Maine Dept. of Education)**

• The assessments are administered in our schools because they help parents and

educators understand how the students are doing academically and where they may need

additional support. While it took months for parents and educators to receive student

results from the previous assessment, the new online assessment provides results in just a

matter of weeks so instruction can be improved in real time. The new assessment will also

help reduce the overall amount of testing time annually for students. Additionally, because

all schools in Maine use the same assessment, we can look across the state and see how

schools compare to one another. As a parent, if you see all the schools in your county have

better results on the assessment than your child’s school, you can use that information to

encourage your school to improve how it is supporting students. And as a Department of

Education, we can see where a school may need additional resources from the State,

including more funding or technical assistance.