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MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Principals, Curriculum Directors, District Test Administrators
FROM: Amy Fowler, Deputy Secretary of Education
SUBJECT: Smarter Balanced Assessments Shifted to 9th Grade from 11th Grade
DATE: October 25, 2017

The [Vermont ESSA State Plan](#), developed by the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) with significant stakeholder feedback, received official approval from the US Department of Education in August. As Vermont works to implement an accountability system that better reflects the state's education priorities as stated in Education Quality Standards, changes will need to be made at the state and local level.

One such change is that the high school Smarter Balanced assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics will be administered in 9th grade rather than 11th grade beginning in spring 2018.

The Agency is working with our assessment contractor to develop the high school test focusing on skills and knowledge that ninth grade students should have to be on track to meet Common Core career and college readiness standards. The test content will be drawn from two sources: test items field-tested with ninth grade students and test items selected by content experts that are deemed appropriate for ninth grade students. The assessment will be administered using the same test delivery systems that are currently in place at other grades.

This change will provide seven continuous years of results for each student that will be useful for measuring growth and will reduce the testing burden for students in 11th grade as they prepare for other career and college ready assessments.

While there are likely local scheduling and staffing considerations associated with 9th grade test administration, a school's most important step in preparing for the change is to ensure the curriculum is aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

To answer additional questions regarding the 9th grade Smarter Balanced assessments, the agency developed a list of [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

For additional information on Smarter Balance and high school assessments please contact [Michael Hock](#).

Other important State Plan changes requiring local-level action are identified on the [State Plan Readiness Checklist](#). As the details of these other changes emerge, the Agency of Education will release additional information regarding implementation.