problems with the current system by shifting focus to student preparation for college and career; measuring critical thinking and complex student learning, as opposed to basic skills; providing teachers timely, instructionally useful data; raising the bar for success instead of lowering it; and using smart technology rather than multiple-choice, fill-in-the-bubble tests. Hopes are high that this next step in the U.S. assessment experiment can overcome the significant obstacles facing education and the testing system.

Common Core Assessments: Challenges and Opportunities

The new student assessments will support the Common Core State Standards, which were developed by state governors and chief state school officers and adopted by more than 40 states and the District of Columbia. The common core initiative, of which ASCD is an endorsing partner, aims for fewer, higher, and deeper standards that model higher-achieving countries that teach fewer topics more deeply each year and focus more on synthesis and analysis.

The common assessment will be developed by two consortia: the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC).

- The PARCC tests will assess students throughout the year on their ability to read complex text, complete research projects, perform classroom speaking and listening assignments, and work with digital media. For accountability purposes, students’