



Sisters School District

Frequently Asked Questions about the Smarter Balanced Test

Why are the scores lower?

These new tests are designed to challenge students, so it's not surprising the results are different from previous years. What's important to remember is that the results represent a new baseline that teachers and parents can use to measure progress toward college and career readiness.

Lower test scores do not mean that schools are performing worse, or that students are learning less. Similarly, a drop in student proficiency scores does not reflect a drop in performance, but is a reflection of the higher standards Oregon adopted to ensure students achieve 21st century college and career readiness. As with any change, there is a period of transition as teachers and students get used to the new standards and tests.

In Kentucky, the first state to begin using the Common Core State Standards, the percentage of high school graduates ready for college and career has increased from 34 percent to 62 percent in the four years.

Is this a new test? Why did we change?

The Smarter Balanced tests were new last year and replace the previous end-of-year tests in English and math. The new assessment is aligned to Oregon's college-and career-ready standards, which set clear, consistent guidelines for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in math and English. The new test provides a more accurate indicator of where students are on their path to success after high school.

What subjects and grades are tested?

The Smarter Balanced tests assess student performance in math and English in grades 3-8 and 11.

What's different about the new assessment?

The new assessment, which replaced Oregon's previous end-of-year tests in English and math, asks students to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and skills in areas such as critical thinking, analytical writing, and problem solving.

Through our work with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, Oregon is administering a high-quality assessment that has benefited from input from classroom teachers, principals, curriculum directors and other educators, as well as experts and state education agency staff from Oregon and across the country.

What is a "good score"?

The student test results mark a new baseline that enables all of us to know where students stand on their path to success in college and career. We are committed to ensuring that all students are

prepared with the critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning skills that they need to be successful in life.

Students scoring a 3 or 4 have mastered content and are on target for being ready for college-level coursework. Students receiving a 1 or 2 have not yet mastered content and will likely need greater supports.

A full breakdown of the score results can be found [here](#).

Will these test scores impact student promotion?

No student will be held back a grade or kept from graduating based on the results of the assessment alone.

What can teachers do with the results?

Our dedicated teachers are focused on helping all students succeed. These scores are one of many factors that provide teachers with feedback on how they can best meet the needs of the students in their classrooms. Districts will work with teachers to reflect on their practices and strengthen instruction through continued professional development and collaboration.

What can schools do with the results?

Having accurate and descriptive data is an important part of ensuring that our schools are providing all students with a quality education. The new data will help our district improve instruction, strategically support teachers, and assess school performance as compared with other schools across our state and country.

What can parents do with the results?

Parents should review the results and work with teachers to identify strategies to improve student performance. For example, tutoring or after-school programs may be available to help students practice their skills. In addition, parents can support their child's learning at home by focusing on areas needing more work. Parents should also encourage their children to do their best and reassure them that test scores are only one indicator of progress.

What can parents do to help their children?

Parents are essential to a child's success. By working together with their child's teacher, they can identify ways of supporting their child both in and outside the classroom. For example, teachers may be able to recommend reading strategies that parents can practice at home with their child.

How many parents opted their child out of the assessments?

We all want what is best for kids, and part of that is honestly knowing where kids are academically so we can do what is best for them. Keeping kids from taking these new end-of-year tests is not a solution and will cause parents and teachers to lose a key measure of how students are doing: whether they need more help or if they should be accelerated. Overall, the number of parents opting their student out of the assessments is very small.

How do opt-outs impact district scores?

These new tests are important in measuring how kids are doing because it's a reflection of how well they have been taught. If the number of students taking the tests drops, we won't have the

data we need to fully inform teachers, schools, districts, and the state of how children are performing and to hold schools and the state accountable for results.

How are you keeping student data safe?

Protecting student privacy and data is a top priority. The state of Oregon retains control over student information, and federal law prohibits the creation of a federal database with students' personally identifiable information. Oregon data collection adheres to all federal and state privacy laws, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

How does this score impact my child academically?

Having accurate data is an important part of ensuring that our schools are providing the right supports for your child to be successful. Your child's score provides a valuable indicator of where your child is on his/her path to college and career and how our schools can better support him/her along that journey. We want every child in our district to be college and career ready. You should review the results and work with teachers to identify strategies to help your child be successful. For example, many of our schools offer tutoring or after-school programs to help students practice their skills.

How have teachers been supported during this transition?

Supporting our teachers through this transition has been a top priority. We have been working together to prepare for the new assessments since Oregon's college-and career-ready standards were adopted in 2010 through extensive professional development sessions. I will continue to work with principals and teachers to ensure that we are providing the support schools and teachers need to strengthen instructional practices and help students succeed.

What supports are being provided to help students meet the new academic standards?

All of the great work happening in our schools has centered on preparing students to meet the challenges of the new academic standards. Your child's teacher will also use his/her score report to tailor their instruction based upon assessment feedback to help him/her work toward mastery.

If you would like to learn how you can help support your child's learning at home, please reach out to his/her teacher.