

## **Frequently Asked Questions for Parents:**

### **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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 are new this 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](#).

**How will test results be used? [Use the following questions to guide your state specific response.]**

- **Will these scores exempt students from remedial education?**  
Our new academic standards are guidelines that have been mapped to what students need to know to be able to successfully complete entry level college courses without remediation. Students meeting or exceeding grade level achievement standards should not need remediation in college. In fact, more than 200 colleges, including Oregon universities and community colleges, have already agreed to exempt students from developmental coursework if they meet proficiency standards on their end of year test.
- **Will these scores impact student promotion?**  
No student will be held back a grade or kept from graduating based on the results of the assessment alone.
- **Will these scores impact teacher evaluations?**  
Teachers in grades 4-8 will use Smarter Balanced data to set student learning and growth goals for the 2015-16 school year.

**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.