

Sample Cover letter for Individual Student Report Form

{Date}

Dear {parent/guardian name},

Last Spring, your student took the 2015 Smarter Balanced Assessment in math and English. These online tests replaced the OAKS (Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) and match the content and skills your student is learning in class. The tests move away from previous fill-in-the bubble end of year exams that focused on rote memorization, to a format which asks students to explain their reasoning. The new tests measure more complex, real-world skills such as critical-thinking, writing, and problem solving, and they are aligned to a higher set of learning standards designed to prepare your child for success in college and the workplace. We have raised the bar in Oregon in order to make sure your student is prepared to compete for jobs here at home and around the country. For this reason, your child's score, as well as the school and district averages, may look lower this year. However, just like we saw with OAKS, these results will improve over time as students and teachers rise to the challenge of these higher expectations.

It's important to remember that this is a transition year. These results represent a new baseline for all Oregon students and provide a clearer picture about where your student is on their path to college and career readiness. These tests are only one measure of students' academic success, and no student will be held back a grade or kept from graduating based on the results. The results of the tests – as well as information about your student's work in the classroom – help your child, their teachers, and you understand more about their strengths and areas for improvement so learning gaps can be addressed early.

This report contains information about how your student did on the state English and math tests. You will notice the tests are scored differently than they were in the past. Students who receive a 3 or 4 on the test (on a 4 point scale) are considered on track to graduate high school college- and career-ready. The report includes detailed information about the areas in math and English where your student has mastered content and where he or she needs additional support. We encourage you to meet with your child's teachers to discuss his or her progress, to raise any questions you may have, and determine how to best support the work that your student does in school and at home. We are committed to working with you and your child to make sure he or she has the support needed to reach these new expectations.

The teachers, principals, and staff in [school district] want to help all of our students gain the knowledge and skills they need each year so that they can successfully graduate high school prepared for their next steps.

We look forward to working with you to help your child achieve his or her potential and graduate prepared for future success.

Thank you,

Planning to go to College?

Smarter Balanced and Your Senior Coursework Choices Can Help

Results from the Smarter Balanced tests will tell you whether you are acquiring the skills and knowledge needed for success in college. Once you get to college, new agreements adopted by Oregon's public community colleges and universities may allow you to use the test results to enroll directly in credit-bearing courses.

If you score a 3 or 4 on the high school Smarter Balanced tests and meet additional requirements for academic rigor in classes during your senior year, you can be exempt from some placement exams for entry-level college classes. Oregon college leaders are showing confidence that students who score well on Smarter Balanced and take challenging courses throughout high school are entering college ready to succeed. As long as technical issues are resolved as expected, students starting with the graduating high school class of 2016 can take advantage of the agreements.

Here's what you need to do if you want to be eligible to use your Smarter Balanced scores in college:

- ✓ Score a 3 or higher on the Smarter Balanced tests in 11th grade.
- ✓ Keep going in 12th grade.

Take academically rigorous coursework in English and math and do well in them. Students who want to enroll in a community college need to earn college-level credits in mathematics and/or English courses during high school by participating in programs like dual credit, early college, local accelerated credit models, and/or acing AP or IB courses and exams. (If you don't have access to these courses, take other rigorous classes which help keep up your skills so you can enter college on the right track.)

- ✓ Apply and meet admissions requirements to one of Oregon's public colleges or universities, and enroll the year after graduation.
- ✓ Indicate your interest in using your Smarter Balanced scores to place into credit-bearing, entry-level courses (your scores won't be shared automatically). Note that some college courses have pre-requisites, so check with your campus advisor about specific courses as you register.

What if I didn't get a 3 or 4 on Smarter Balanced?

You do not need to receive a score of 3 or 4 to graduate from high school or get into college. But lower scores may indicate that there are certain skills and knowledge you need to focus on more before leaving high school. Work with your teachers and counsellors to identify gaps and make a plan for boosting your skills before arriving at college.

Want to know more?

- Learn more about Smarter Balanced at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org>
- Get details about the university and community college agreements at <http://oregoncoretocollege.org>
- Learn about Oregon's shift to Smarter Balanced at <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=3298>
- Contact individual community colleges or universities to learn their specific guidelines.

Charting Your Pathway to College with Smarter Balanced

The Smarter Balanced assessment measures how well students are developing the skills needed for success in college or the workplace, allowing you to make adjustments and get additional support along the way. Students take Smarter Balanced in grades 3 – 8 and 11.

While you do not need to earn a 3 or 4 on Smarter Balanced to graduate from high school or get into college, students who do well can receive an additional benefit in college. When you score a 3 or 4, continue to pursue rigorous courses through high school and get admitted to an Oregon public college or university, you can be exempt from some placement exams and enroll directly in credit-bearing classes your first year.



Your **Smarter Balanced** assessment scores will fall into one of four levels, with one score for math and one for English. You will still need to be admitted to college, regardless of your score, but your performance on Smarter Balanced will give you useful information about where you are on your path to college preparedness.



For more information about using Smarter Balanced scores for college course placement, go to oregoncoretocollege.org or contact colleges or universities directly.

STEP 1

Try your hardest!
Aim to score a 3 or 4 on the Smarter Balanced assessments.



11th
GRADE

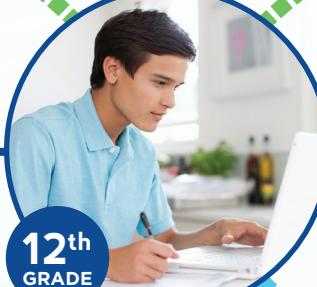
Check in regularly with your teachers, parents, and counselor



Check in regularly with your teachers, parents, and counselor



12th
GRADE



You're right on target-Keep it up!
Continue your learning during senior year with rigorous coursework including college-prep classes or options that may earn you college credit, like AP, IB and dual credit courses.

STEP 2

College Application
You apply for college or university during your senior year.



College Application
You apply for college or university during your senior year.

STEP 3

Go directly into credit-bearing courses. You enter college within a year after graduation and have the option to use your results in lieu of some course placement exams to enroll in college-level coursework.



College

Smarter Balanced Assessment
You receive a 1 or 2.



You Can Do It!
You may need extra help to succeed in college. Work with your teachers and counselors to identify gaps and make a game plan for boosting your skills.



Placement Exam
Once you enroll in college, you may have to take a placement exam to enroll in college-level coursework.

TEMPLATE: Sample Newsletter Message to Parents

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As many of you already know, this spring, your child participated in a new state assessment called Smarter Balanced in English and math. 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.

These student test scores establish a new baseline aligned with Oregon's college-and career-ready standards, and they should not be compared to previous statewide test results. As with any change, there will be a period of adjustment, as teachers and students get used to the new standards and tests.

Your child's score, as well as the school and district averages, may look lower this year. These new tests measure more complex, real-world skills, such as critical-thinking, writing, and problem solving. These scores cannot be compared to previous test scores. Instead, they are setting a new, more accurate baseline from which progress can be measured moving forward.

Our ultimate goal is to ensure that all students are set up to be successful in college and beyond, and that will remain the focus of our district as we begin the new school year.

We will be working hard to keep you informed about our progress as a district and will provide opportunities for discussion and feedback.

Teachers are the experts about what is happening in their classrooms and are an invaluable resource for parents. I encourage you to reach out to your child's teacher(s) with any questions you may have about your child's score report or academic trajectory.

If you have general questions or want more information about the assessments, please visit our website at [\[INSERT DISTRICT WEBSITE\]](#) or call [\[INSERT PHONE NUMBER\]](#).

Thank you,

[\[Superintendent/Principal\]](#)

Sample Newsletter Article on Smarter Balanced and Higher Education

Results from the new Smarter Balanced tests tell Oregon students (and their parents and educators) whether they are on track learning the skills and knowledge needed for success in college. Agreements adopted by Oregon's public colleges and universities will allow students who score well to use the results to enroll directly in credit-bearing courses once they get to college. They also give all students an incentive to try their hardest throughout high school to prepare for college success.

Students in the class of 2016 are the first to be eligible to take advantage of the agreements when they get to college, should technical requirements be resolved as expected in the coming months. Until now, most first-year college students have been required to take placement exams to determine whether they are ready to enroll in transferable college-level, credit-bearing courses.

The agreements allow high school juniors who score a 3 or 4 on the Smarter Balanced tests and meet additional requirements for academic rigor in classes during grade 12 to enroll directly in college credit-bearing classes. Students with lower scores will get information about areas where they need to improve and can work with their teachers and counsellors to make a plan for boosting their skills before arriving at college.

To take advantage of these agreements, students will need to choose to proactively share their Smarter Balanced scores and 12th-grade coursework with their prospective college and enroll the year after graduation. Students should contact the institutions to which they are admitted next spring for more information about these policies and the process for taking advantage of these agreements.

Oregon co-created the Smarter Balanced tests with 20 states, and five others so far have developed similar placement exam waiver policies for the test results, including California, Delaware, Hawaii, South Dakota and Washington. In all, these new policies are in place at nearly 200 higher education institutions nationwide, including 47 public universities, 10 independent colleges and universities, and 140 public technical and community colleges. More information about Oregon's policies is available at www.oregoncoretocollege.org.

TEMPLATE: Robo Call Script

For Superintendents/Principals (60 seconds)

- Hello, this is [NAME], superintendent of [INSERT DISTRICT NAME] public schools.
- This week your child will receive/received a score report from the new Smarter Balanced assessment which was taken this past spring.
- Replacing our previous end-of-year test, the Smarter Balanced assessment more accurately measures the real-world skills needed for success in college and career like the ability to think critically and solve complex problems.
- These results are the first for Oregon's students to measure the academic goals laid out in our college and career ready standards.
- The scores mark a new baseline and should not be compared to previous scores.
- As with any change, there is a period of transition as teachers and students get used to the new standards and tests.
- Our ultimate goal is to ensure that all students are set up to be successful in college and beyond, and that will remain the focus of our district as we begin the new school year.
- We will be working hard to keep you informed about our progress as a district and provide opportunities for discussion and feedback.
- Teachers are the experts about what is happening in their classrooms and are an invaluable resource for parents. I encourage you to reach out to your child's teacher(s) with any questions you may have about your child's score report or academic trajectory.
- If you have general questions or want more information about the assessments, please visit our website at [INSERT DISTRICT WEBSITE] or call [INSERT PHONE NUMBER].

TEMPLATE: FAQ 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 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 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](#).

TEMPLATE: FAQ for Parents

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.

TEMPLATE: FAQ for Parents

Is there a listing of school or district state test results available?

All school and district data will be available on our district website: [INSERT WEBSITE ADDRESS]

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. [INSERT EXAMPLES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT]. 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.

Sample Letter to Parents about Participation

Dear Parent/Guardian

Last spring, students in our district and around the state took new state tests. These tests provide vital information about how well we are preparing our students for their next steps and where they are on their path to college and career readiness. State-wide, about 95% of students took these new tests. However, in [REDACTED] School District, only [REDACTED] percent took the test.

I am deeply concerned by this decrease in participation for several reasons. Statewide, Oregon schools risk losing \$344 million in federal funds if our participation drops too low. But in addition to the financial risk, there is also a very real impact on our school and district improvement efforts.

Accurate and reliable data on student learning helps us to identify where students are struggling, where they are excelling, and whether we are fulfilling our goal of narrowing achievement gaps. In [REDACTED] School District, we are deeply committed to ensuring each and every student in our schools has the supports they need to achieve at high levels and graduate prepared for college and the workforce. If fewer than 95 percent of students take the test, we are left with an incomplete and inaccurate picture of how our students are performing, and this limits our ability to address issues, better serve students, and continue to improve our educational system.

Keeping kids from taking these new end-of-year tests is not a solution. We all want what's best for our students and part of that is honestly knowing where they are academically so we can ensure they have the support they need to thrive. These new tests are a reflection of how well students have been taught. When the number of students taking the tests drops, we don't have the data we need to hold ourselves accountable or make the changes needed to improve struggling schools.

Our ultimate goal is to ensure that all students are set up to be successful in college and beyond and that will remain the focus of our district as we begin this school year. In the upcoming weeks, we will be [holding a parent meeting for you to ask questions]. You can expect to receive additional information soon.

If you have general questions or want more information about the end-of-year tests, please visit our website at [REDACTED]. In addition, I encourage you to reach out to your student's teacher(s) with any questions you may have about your student's progress.

Sincerely,

Sample Educator Key Messages

- We are committed to preparing all students for success in college and career.
- We know that whether they want to go to college or straight into the workplace, our students need to be able to think critically and solve complex problems. Ensuring that our students have these tools empowers parents and students, because it gives them the ability to make choices about their future and make the most of their opportunities.
- **The student test results released this fall mark a new baseline that enables all of us to know where students stand on their path to success.**
- These results measure the academic goals laid out in our college and career ready standards aimed at preparing students with the skills and knowledge they need.
- The assessment scores this year should not be compared to previous scores. As with any change, there is a period of adjustment as teachers and students get used to the new standards and tests.
- The new assessments replaced our previous end-of-year test OAKS (Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills). It is a much better, more accurate tool for educators, students, and parents as we work together to prepare students for success in the 21st century.
- It's already working for students and teachers—more young people are prepared for success. The results set a new baseline, and we will see scores increase over time.
 - For example, 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 four years.
 - [IF DISTRICT AVERAGE IS ABOVE STATE AVERAGE]: Across the district, our students are performing above state averages, confirming that we're on the right track to setting all students up for success.
 - [IF DISTRICT AVERAGE IS BELOW STATE AVERAGE]: We know there's still a lot of work to do to prepare students for success in college and beyond. But by having accurate data we can work to help all students on their pathway to success.
- We are continuing to support teachers across the district through professional development on College and Career-Ready Standards and the new assessments so that they can further strengthen instruction, and help students who may be struggling and need additional assistance.
- For the past 5 years, our educators have been working hard to help all of our students rise to the challenge set by our new academic goals. We applaud their efforts and will continue to find ways to support them.
 - [SPECIFIC EXAMPLE OF: PD and/or RESOURCES THAT HAVE BEEN AND WILL BE PROVIDED]
- Teachers are the experts about what is happening in their classrooms and are an invaluable resource for parents. I encourage parents to reach out to your child's teacher(s) with any questions you may have about your child's score report or academic trajectory.

Sample Key Messages about Participation

Participation Matters

- Federal law requires all students to be tested. Before this law was put into place, student participation did not reflect diverse student populations. Often, the students who were left out were the students most in need of support.
- Oregon schools risk losing \$344 million in federal funds if our participation drops too low. In addition to the financial risk, there is also a very real impact on our district improvement efforts.
- Not having information on our students' academic progress limits our ability to accurately identify where students are struggling, where they are excelling, and whether we are fulfilling the goal of narrowing achievement gaps.
- The end-of-year tests offer critically important information to parents who want to help their student improve and teachers who want to ensure they are tailoring their instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- While the annual assessment is just one measure, it is an honest and important measure of how kids are performing academically.
- It is critical for parents, teachers, and school and state leaders to receive meaningful information at least once a year on how each student in Oregon is performing and how schools are working to ensure all students are making progress.
- We cannot accomplish our goals if fewer than 95 percent of students take the test. Instead, we will be left with an incomplete and inaccurate picture of how students are performing across the state as well as how each local school is working to meet students' needs.
- In particular, the drop in participation will limit our ability to identify and address achievement and opportunity gaps for our students in poverty, students of color, and students with disabilities.

Test Results Offer Valuable Feedback

- State test results provide clear, meaningful, and relevant feedback to students, parents, and educators on how prepared kids are for college and career so they can be successful in a globally-competitive world.
- The results identify students' strengths and areas for improvement.
- No student, parent, or teacher should be discouraged by the scores, which will never be used to determine whether a student moves on to the next grade or graduates. Rather, results will provide an opportunity to focus on the needs of the student and support teachers and schools in their work.
- Students who earn a Level 3 or 4 on the tests may use this to fulfill the Essential Skills requirement in order to graduate from high school.
- Students who earn a Level 3 or 4 on the tests and meet senior coursework requirements may also be able to forgo college placement testing and move directly into credit bearing courses in higher ed.

Higher Standards, Quality Instruction, & Better Tests

Raising the Bar for all Oregon students

- **Students and teachers are rising to the challenge of higher standards and their hard work is paying off.** More students met Oregon's college- and career-ready standard on new state tests than originally projected.
- **The online tests ask students to engage in new ways through interactive questions, multi-step problems, and student writing.** These types of tests take longer than purely multiple choice tests, but they also provide more accurate information on student learning and are designed to be more engaging than previous state tests.
- **Students who receive a 3 or 4 on the test (on a 4-point scale) are considered on track to graduate high school college and career-ready.** Scores in English and math will be more detailed and able to highlight student's strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Test results will provide important feedback to students, parents, and educators.** While they are only one measure of students' academic success, this information allows educators to address learning gaps early and better prepare students for success.
- **This year represents a new baseline for our state, and we expect the percent meeting to increase in the coming years.** In the past, when Oregon raised expectations, there was an initial drop in scores followed by an increase as students and teachers rose to the challenge of higher standards.
- **The transition to higher standards and new tests will require patience and persistence.** Our educators will continue to focus on implementation of the standards and high-quality instruction.
- **Working to close the achievement gap is a top priority for Oregon.** The standards and tests promote equity by ensuring all students, especially historically underserved students, are offered access to high-level content. No student will be held back a grade or kept from graduating based on the results of the tests.

TEMPLATE: FAQ 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 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 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"?

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

TEMPLATE: FAQ for Parents

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.

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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.

TEMPLATE: FAQ for Parents

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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. [INSERT EXAMPLES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT]. 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.



HIGHER STANDARDS STRONGER MINDS

WHAT ARE OREGON'S COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS?

These standards, also known as the Common Core, are a set of high learning expectations in math and English that are designed to better prepare K-12 students for success in college, work, and life. The standards offer a clear picture of what students should know and be able to do at every grade level.

Over the last 5 years, Oregon educators have worked hard to implement these more rigorous standards for students, raising the bar for learning. This is a big change in the way students learn and one that will take time to see results, but it's an approach that will help Oregon students acquire real-world skills needed to be successful in the 21st century.

TOP 3 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT OREGON'S STANDARDS

CONSISTENT LEARNING EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Before these standards, all 50 states had different sets of expectations for what students should know and be able to do in each grade. Oregon's college- and career-ready standards help ensure that all students graduate from high school with the core academic knowledge and skills necessary for success in their next steps.

STUDENTS FOCUS ON DEVELOPING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

The standards go deeper into fewer topics and focus on developing students' understanding of key concepts. They build on one another, allowing students to apply the skills and knowledge learned in the previous grade to real-life situations.



BUILDING THE CRITICAL SKILLS STUDENTS NEED IN THE JOB MARKET

Common Core focuses on building and applying real-world skills students need to be ready for college and work -- so they can be more competitive in the new global economy.

STANDARDS IN OREGON SCHOOLS

80% of Oregon teachers report what is taught in their school aligns with the new college- and career-ready standards.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are Oregon's standards important to you and your child?

The standards provide benchmarks, or expectations, for teaching and learning at every grade level. The standards are consistent across states and match the standards used by top-performing nations. Consistent learning expectations will help parents and teachers work together to make sure students have the opportunities they need to succeed in school and in life.

Why has Oregon adopted these college- and career-ready standards?

Oregon adopted these standards and the aligned tests because they will help students be better prepared for college and work.

Currently in Oregon:

- Far too many of our students graduate unprepared for college and careers; and
- Approximately 66% of our students who go on to a community college need to take remedial courses in English, math, or both.

Will schools and teachers still have control over teaching materials and other local decisions?

Yes. The way in which the new learning standards are taught is up to each of Oregon's 197 school districts. Each school or district will continue to have the flexibility to select the teaching materials and resources that best meet the needs of its students.

Who developed the standards?

The development of these standards began in 2009.

Hundreds of teachers, education researchers, mathematicians, and other experts across the country provided input and guidance and have collaborated in developing the learning standards. With higher standards, nearly every state is now working together and sharing resources to help our kids get ready for life after high school.

If we're raising learning expectations, will the test be harder, too?

The Smarter Balanced tests are different from Oregon's previous end-of-year tests because they challenge students to think critically and apply their skills to real-world problems. The test questions go beyond multiple choice and allow students to explain their answers, interact with texts, and build equations. Research shows that when you raise learning expectations, students will work harder to meet them.

Where can I learn more about the standards in Oregon?

Please visit www.corestandards.org.

HIGHER STANDARDS IN OREGON

2010: Oregon officially adopts higher standards

2011-15: Teachers receive professional development to support successful implementation of the standards

2014-15: Students take new tests aligned to the standards called Smarter Balanced

2015-16: Continue implementation

Higher Standards, Better Assessments

Preparing Oregon Students For Life After High School

Oregon is committed to providing a quality K-12 education for all students, regardless of where they live or which school they attend. Over the last 5 years, our public schools have been working hard to implement college and career-ready standards, known as Common Core. These standards provide clear expectations for what every student should know and be able to do at each grade level. Now, we are using new tests aligned to our higher standards that will measure the real-world skills our students need to be successful in the 21st Century.

SMARTER BALANCED IS A BETTER TEST

Smarter Balanced Assessments are different from Oregon's previous tests in several ways:

1. **The tests challenge students** to think critically and apply their knowledge and skills to real-world problems.
2. **The test questions go beyond multiple-choice** and allow students to explain their answers, interact with texts, and build equations.
3. **The test provides all students, regardless of disability or primary language**, with the supports they need to demonstrate what they know and can do.



Students will take Smarter Balanced English and Math tests **once at the end of the school year** in grades 3-8 and 11.

Students who **receive a 3 or 4** on the test (on a 4-point scale) **are considered on track to graduate** high school college- and career-ready.

These tests are one measure of students' academic success and **no student will be held back a grade or kept from graduating** based on the results.

WHAT THE RESULTS MEAN

Scores **represent a new baseline** and **provide more honest information** about what our students know and can do – and where they need the most help – so we can raise the bar for all Oregon students.

Patience and persistence will be required as we transition to higher expectations but this year's results indicate that Oregon students and teachers are rising to the challenge.



Visit www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=4302 to learn more about the tests

