

# **A Best Practices Guide for Districts**

Regarding When to Administer the Oregon  
Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS)



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## PLANNING EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENTS

Over the past 10 years, Oregon districts have gained knowledge regarding how to best balance a summative assessment with other types of assessments. This document was developed in collaboration with Oregon school districts, Education Service Districts, Legislators, Stand for Children, and the Oregon Education Association. This document is intended to help disseminate this knowledge and to provide general decision-making guidance for teachers and administrators on the most appropriate time to test students on the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS). This document does not provide comprehensive or technical guidance on any other forms of assessment or on student-level instructional decision-making.

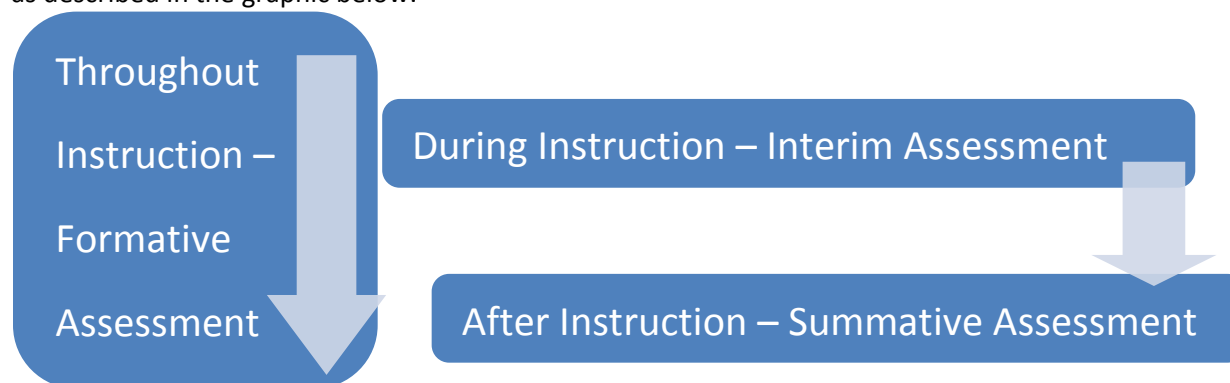
## OAKS AS A SUMMATIVE TEST

The Oregon Statewide Assessments are summative assessments, which are assessments of learning generally administered at the end of an academic school year. Summative assessments are typically used for school accountability, program evaluation, and to estimate groups of students' achievement levels. Summative assessments are not designed as diagnostic tools for student placement or as formative assessments. Although OAKS Online supports multiple test opportunities per student, the test measures the breadth of the content standards which are comprised of a broad range of knowledge and skills. Given that students respond to between 40-50 questions covering such a broad range of topics, OAKS is not sensitive to the gains in student learning that occur between a few weeks of instruction.

There are different types of assessments that have specific purposes. For example:

- Summative assessments are generally defined as periodic assessments that determine how much knowledge and skills groups of students (e.g. programs, schools, districts and states) have acquired over a long period of time (e.g. end of the year and end of course).
- Interim and Predictive assessments are generally defined as periodic assessments that may be used to determine the progress of groups of students based on focused elements of content.
- Formative assessment is a process that supports learning and is used while a student is still engaged in the relevant instruction.

A balanced approach to assessment includes summative assessment as part of a larger assessment plan as described in the graphic below.



For the assessment system to be effective, it should be well planned and understood by all the educators and stakeholders involved. The planning should include descriptions of which students will be assessed, what tools will be used, how and when the data will be analyzed, and what actions will be taken based on the analysis of the data. Districts can find some resources that support this type of planning at:

<http://www.oregondatapoint.org/>

<http://oregonrti.org/>

<http://assessment.oregonk-12.net/>

As Oregon districts develop and improve their assessment plans, they should consider the following overarching guidelines:

- All students in eligible grades must be tested at least once per year using OAKS. As summative assessments, OAKS assessments provide the most instructional-planning value when scores are analyzed for a group of students (rather than at the individual student level) *after* the students have had adequate opportunity to learn the content standards under assessment.
- Districts may not retest students in grades 3 – 8 who have already met or exceeded the achievement standard at the student's current grade level for an OAKS assessment unless the district receives consent from the student's parent. (Note: districts are not restricted from retesting students in high school.)
- All OAKS tests must be administered in a manner consistent with the OAKS Test Administration Manual. Individual student instructional decisions should always be supported by data from a broader and more comprehensive array of standards-based assessment, not by OAKS assessments alone.
- Testing decisions should be made in the context of implications/next steps (as described in the Decision Making Matrix at the end of this document).
- Given the specific purpose of summative assessments, OAKS can only be used as one component of a collection of evidence regarding the academic needs of individual students.
- Because summative assessments should only be administered after a student has had adequate opportunity to learn the assessed content standards, for most students consistently administering a summative assessment close to the end of a student's school year will likely provide a better gauge of growth and how much students have progressed from year to year. For students receiving accelerated instruction, it may be appropriate to test those students earlier in the year after they have received instruction at the full depth and breadth of the assessed content standards.

## ASSESSMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

Student instructional time should be maximized throughout the school year. When used appropriately, assessment is designed to enhance instruction. However, there are circumstances when assessment may not benefit and could actually interfere with instructional opportunities. Some examples where students' instruction will not benefit from assessment are:

- Administering an interim or summative assessment to a student who has already met or exceeded the state's achievement standard. As stated in Part VI of the Test Administration Manual, districts may not retest students in grades 3 – 8 who have already met or exceeded the achievement standard unless the district receives consent from the student's parent (located at <http://www.ode.state.or.us/go/tam>). (Note: districts are not restricted from retesting students in high school.)
- Administering a summative assessment to a student who has not received adequate opportunity to learn the assessed content standards and for whom classroom-derived evidence indicates that performance is far below the state's achievement standard.
- Delaying or interrupting the instruction of students who are not being assessed while their peers are taking an assessment.
- Omitting instructional opportunities for students after they complete their tests while waiting for their peers to finish.

Although obstacles (i.e. test administration constraints, test security management, coordinating staff for test administration, and computer lab scheduling) may be difficult to negotiate, all students (those who are testing and those who finish early) benefit from intentional pre-planning. Some suggestions include:

- Creating an assessment plan based on an individual student's needs and opportunities.
- Team teaching or combining grade level classrooms to enable shared test administration and instructional responsibilities while addressing student testing requirements.
- Providing computer-based instruction to enhance student learning while other students are testing, as long as precautions are taken so that the validity of tests for students who continue to take OAKS is not compromised. Examples of such precautions include sufficient spacing, placement, and visual barriers.
- Leveraging volunteers to assist classrooms (consistent with district policies and best practices of high quality instruction)

Please see the Decision Making Matrix below for additional context.

## OAKS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

Students are unlikely to meet the high school achievement standards if they have not yet been instructed in the content included on the test. Therefore, OAKS should only be administered to high school students prior to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade year who are receiving high school level instruction at a depth and level of rigor consistent with instruction typically provided to students enrolled in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

## DECISION MAKING MATRIX

**Fall and Early Winter Testing:**

Administer OAKS only to students who have received adequate opportunity to learn the assessed content standards and who have demonstrated proficiency in the grade level content based on **classroom-derived** evidence (e.g., formative or interim assessments).

**Rationale for Testing in the Fall and Early Winter:**

For those students who have received accelerated instruction and have had adequate opportunity to learn the assessed content standards, testing those students in the fall or early winter may help the district to alleviate resource demands (e.g., computer labs, internet bandwidth, instructional assistants, IT staff) when testing the majority of students later in the school year.

**Next Steps after Testing (based on student performance):**

- If the student meets or exceeds the achievement standard:
  - For students in grades 3 – 8, districts may not retest the student unless the district receives consent from the student's parent. (This restriction is described in Part VI of the Test Administration Manual.)
  - For students in high school, retest the student later in the year after providing the student with additional instruction only if the district expects a different outcome based on additional classroom-derived evidence and if retesting is consistent with district procedures.
- If the student does not meet the OAKS achievement standard:
  - Investigate potential causes for the discrepancies between the student's performance on classroom-derived evidence (e.g., formative or interim assessments) and the student's performance on the summative OAKS assessment.
  - Provide targeted instructional supports where appropriate.
  - Retest the student later in the year after providing the student with additional instruction only if the district expects a different outcome based on additional classroom-derived evidence and if retesting is consistent with district procedures.

## **Late Winter and Spring Testing:**

Administer OAKS to all students who do not have a valid test for the current school year.

### **Rationale for Testing in Late Winter and Spring:**

- Later testing helps to ensure each student has had sufficient instructional time and allows for the provision of adequate instructional supports and interventions as appropriate
- Administering the summative OAKS Assessment in Spring is more consistent with the direction of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) common assessment
- To meet accountability requirements
- To measure year-to-year growth in a cohort of students

### **Next Steps after Testing (based on student performance):**

- If the student meets or exceeds the achievement standard:
  - For students in grades 3 – 8, districts may not retest the student unless the district receives consent from the student's parent. (This restriction is described in Part VI of the Test Administration Manual.)
  - For students in high school, retest the student later in the year after providing the student with additional instruction only if the district expects a different outcome based on additional classroom-derived evidence and if retesting is consistent with district procedures.
- If the student does not meet the achievement standard:
  - Provide targeted instructional supports where appropriate.
  - Re-test the student later in the year after providing the student with additional instruction only if the district expects a different outcome based on additional classroom-derived evidence and if retesting is consistent with district procedures.

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING INFORMATION TO ADDRESS POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

**Why is it appropriate to use OAKS as evidence for the determination of school and district accountability ratings if OAKS shouldn't be used for education decisions regarding individual students?**

OAKS can be used to support decision-making regarding individual students, but it should not be the only evidence used in the process. Given that OAKS has only approximately 40-50 questions covering a broad set of content (or one essay in the case of writing), an individual student's test result may vary in part based on factors beyond the degree to which the student has become proficient in the content. A longer test would tend to decrease this variability, but would take more instructional time. An alternative to making a longer test is to aggregate the test results of many individual students. This has the effect of cancelling out the unique factors that might affect student performance and provide a more robust measure of student learning for the group. For individual students, OAKS can best be used to supplement classroom derived evidence or as a general guide for the teacher regarding areas for additional diagnostic assessment.

**Why is it appropriate to use OAKS as evidence for the Essential Skills if OAKS shouldn't be used for education decisions regarding individual students?**

Assessments of Essential Skills are only one piece of information included in the determination as to whether a student is eligible to receive a diploma. In addition to the assessments, students provide evidence of their skills as described by courses, grades, and credits. Further, students may use assessments other than OAKS as evidence of the Assessment of Essential Skills. Providing multiple opportunities in multiple assessment formats reduces the risk that students may be denied a diploma despite having acquired sufficient proficiency in the required Essential Skills.

**Why is ODE releasing this guidance now?**

The goal of this guidance is to encourage districts to plan assessments carefully with a focus on how the data from each assessment will be used to increase student achievement. There may be some cases where electing to administer multiple opportunities for a student is warranted. However, these cases should most likely be less frequent than is current practice in Oregon. Further, as AYP targets and the rigor of achievement standards increase, it is increasingly important that plans about when and how often to test students be made using strategies that are data-based and focused on using assessment results to improve both teaching and learning. Finally, the SBAC (SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium) will be operational in 2014-2015, and will have more limited opportunities on the summative assessment. Oregon has an opportunity to change practice now to better align with the SBAC system while also better utilizing student instruction time.



**What resources are available to help districts develop strategies for appropriately retesting students?**

Some students will meet the achievement standard on their first testing attempt while other students may benefit from retesting after receiving further instruction. Teachers may face the challenge of balancing the needs of those students who would benefit from additional opportunities to test with the needs of those students who would **not** benefit from retesting (either because they have already met the achievement standard or because they are still receiving instruction). One approach that districts might take to meet this challenge is to train staff or volunteers beyond classroom teachers to act as test administrators. This would provide those students who would benefit from retesting with additional opportunities to test while allowing the classroom teacher to stay in the classroom, providing instruction to those students who are not retesting. Another approach that districts have successfully used is to have grade-levels teachers coordinate so that, while one teacher supervises a make-up test session for all students from all classes needing to retest, the other grade-level teachers present a lesson plan for those students who are not engaged in testing. In cases where this is not practicable, districts might arrange for students who are not retesting to work independently on other projects, such as work samples or personalized learning, while their classmates retest.

NOTE: To the extent possible, districts should avoid having anyone in the test environment who is not actively involved in testing, including other students. When a district cannot avoid having non-testing students present in the test environment, the district must arrange the test environment to ensure that the security and validity requirements described on p. B-2 of the Test Administration Manual are met (<http://www.ode.state.or.us/go/tam>).

**How will this guide help districts transition to the SMARTER Balanced Assessment?**

Oregon is participating in the SBAC to develop a common assessment based on the common core state standards in language arts and mathematics. Most students will take the SBAC summative assessment once per year. That assessment will be comprised of up to approximately 60% constructed response as well as one to two performance tasks. Although there will be an allowance for one additional administration, that will most likely be used in cases where the initial administration was invalid. In addition to the summative assessment, SBAC will make available a set of optional interim assessments and formative tools that are explicitly designed to guide instructional decisions during the year, at both the group and individual student level.