

A BIG WIN FOR OREGON STUDENTS



The Oregon Common Core State Standards

In 2014, approximately 66% of Oregon high school graduates who enrolled in community college needed to take a remedial reading or math class—even with a high school diploma, these students were not prepared for success in postsecondary education.

On the 2013 Nation's Report Card (also known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP), less than half of all 4th and 8th grade students demonstrated proficiency in reading and math, yet that same year the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) reported that more than 60% of students in these grades demonstrated proficiency in both subjects. Clearly, there was a disconnect—although most students were graduating high school

and achieving proficiency on state assessments, they were not prepared with the skills needed for college and careers. In 2010, the Oregon State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in English language arts (ELA) and math to help bridge what students learn in the classroom with what competencies they need to succeed in life after high school graduation.

According to a 2010 report by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, Oregon's previous standards were mediocre. The ELA state standards did not cover 11th and 12th grades or provide teachers with the guidance needed to drive instruction. The math standards were well-presented and easy to read, but lacked appropriate coverage of arithmetic and some essential content. On the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's 2007 *Leaders and Laggards* report, Oregon's standards received a D in rigor and the state received an F in postsecondary workforce readiness. The Common Core State Standards are a vast improvement and focus on the skills students need most.

With the adoption of higher standards, Oregon is one step closer to ensuring that students will have the opportunity to reach their full potential. By 2020, 67% of jobs in the state will require a postsecondary credential. However, only 36% of adults currently have such a credential, resulting in a 31% skills gap. Higher standards are essential to helping close this gap.

Oregon's Proficiency Performance on the 2013 Nation's Report Card

Assessment	4th Math	4th Reading	8th Math	8th Reading
OAKS	64%	73%	63%	67%
NAEP	40%	33%	34%	37%



A BIG WIN FOR OREGON STUDENTS

Better Standards Deserve Better Assessments

Teachers across Oregon have been hard at work preparing for the standards since their adoption. It has been a significant undertaking involving countless hours of professional development, curricula alignment, and learning strategies to engage students more deeply than ever before. The next phase of this work is to implement an improved assessment that can measure the critical thinking and problem solving skills that the standards emphasize and that our students need to succeed. The OAKS assessment simply cannot evaluate this level of learning.

Putting better assessments in place needs to be part of a larger system of accountability that supports student achievement, holds schools accountable for successfully teaching the content outlined in the standards, and ensures that all students across Oregon receive a high-quality education. Meaningful tests can identify struggling students and schools in need of extra support and interventions and can identify high-achieving students who require support to maintain their academic engagement.

Oregon is a governing member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. For the past four years, teams of academics, testing experts, and teachers have been working tirelessly to create an assessment system aligned to the higher standards. Teachers from more than 20 states, including Oregon, assisted in all phases of test development, including reviewing questions to be included on the assessments. These Smarter Balanced assessments were field tested in spring 2014 in 21 states including Oregon, where more than 24,000 students took the tests.

The tests aim to do the following:

- Accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness.
- Assess a wide range of skills, including critical thinking and writing skills.

- Provide real-time information on student progress to help guide teacher instruction and improve learning.

Students in grades 3–8 and 11 will take these high-quality computer-adaptive tests in math and ELA in spring 2015. There will be a variety of question types that require students to think critically, write, and create visual representations of mathematical concepts. Essay questions ask students to use evidence from multiple text sources to craft their arguments and explain their reasoning. Test questions will adjust the level of difficulty based on a student's previous responses, giving a more accurate picture of which skills a student has mastered and helping teachers and parents ensure students are keeping pace.

A High-Quality Assessment

- Is developed with input from academic and testing experts, as well as teachers.
- Is field tested and reviewed before full implementation.
- Assesses a wide range of real-world skills using a variety of question formats.
- Includes formative or interim assessments that act as academic checkups to ensure that students are keeping pace.
- Provides detailed and timely feedback that sends an early warning signal to teachers if students are not on track so that interventions can be put in place.
- Is comparable across states.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between standards and curriculum?

- Standards are a set of guidelines for what students are expected to know and be able to do at specific points in their education.

Standards provide the foundation for key components of the education system, including curricula, instructional materials, teacher training, and assessments.

- A curriculum is the course of study covering the standards. It is set by local school districts and includes the lesson plans, programs, and textbooks that teachers use to teach the content and skills outlined in the standards.

2. If students are learning with different curricula, how can they take the same test?

- Although teachers use different materials and curricula, students still learn the same skills outlined in the standards. Teachers can be creative in their instruction, designing lessons to best reach their students and establishing a classroom where all students can achieve. Students can learn through a variety of instructional methods and materials, but are still learning the same knowledge and skills necessary for success after high school.

3. Will the new test replace the old state test?

- Yes. The Smarter Balanced ELA and math tests replace the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) in grades 3–8 and 11.

4. Will annual test scores impact schools and districts?

- School-wide test results are used as one measure for school accountability.
- To support educators and students in this transition, Oregon is currently seeking a federal ESEA waiver to postpone using test scores from the first year of Smarter Balanced as a factor in school ratings and teacher evaluations.

5. Will test scores impact teachers?

- Student learning, defined as a measure of student progress across two or more points in time, is one factor used in a teacher's evaluation. It can be measured with scores on the Smarter Balanced assessments or other assessments.



The Oregon Common Core State Standards:

- Are designed to prepare all students with the skills and knowledge they need for success after high school.
- Emphasize real-world skills such as critical thinking, writing, and problem solving.
- Are comparable across states, with educators in more than 40 states having had input on their development.

Better Assessments:

- Give an honest, objective report of how our students are doing.
- Ensure that all students are held to the same expectations.
- Identify struggling students so they can get the help they need.
- Identify high-achieving students to provide them with the resources necessary to continue to excel.

Smarter Balanced:

- A group of states working together to develop high-quality, computer-adaptive assessments that measure college and career readiness in both math and English language arts.

6. How will test scores impact students?

- Since 2007, Oregon graduation requirements have expected students to demonstrate essential skills—and not just take required classes—in order to earn a diploma. These skills include reading and comprehending a variety of texts, writing clearly and accurately, and applying math in a variety of settings. As Oregon transitions to Smarter Balanced, policymakers intend for most students to meet graduation requirements through reaching benchmark scores on the grade 11 test. Students can also show their proficiency through performance on other assessments or by providing work samples, which are graded by teachers or administrators in the district that have been trained to score them.

7. What kind of professional development did teachers receive in preparation for the standards and tests?

- Districts have offered professional development and other support services for teachers to implement the standards since 2010. Locally, teams of teachers have created curricula aligned to the Common Core, giving teachers access to high-quality instructional materials. In 2011, the state provided toolkits to teachers and schools to aid in implementing the standards, and in 2012, teachers began receiving professional development. Districts also created collaborative teams of teachers known as “Professional Learning Teams” to support the implementation of the standards district-wide.

8. What kind of data will be collected? Will it be released?

- Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Oregon is required to collect data on school performance. Aggregate data collected includes student test scores and information such as attendance, support services, and academic growth. *The state will not release any personally identifiable student information.* Only individuals who interact with students on a daily basis, such as teachers and parents, are allowed to see student-specific information.
- Federal law protects the privacy of student information and education records through the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The only information that will be publicly available will contain aggregate data for schools, districts, and subgroups.

9. How were teachers involved in the test development process?

- More than 4,700 educators in Smarter Balanced states assisted in the test development process. In Oregon, teachers reviewed test questions for content, bias/sensitivity, and accessibility and helped develop resources in the Digital Library, an online collection of aligned resources for teachers as they adjust to the standards.

10. Do students need to be computer literate?

- Yes; however, paper and pencil versions will be available during the first three years of testing for schools that cannot meet the technology requirement.
- Schools are using computers in the classroom in the elementary grades to familiarize students with technology and to practice keyboarding skills. Online practice tests are available to students so they can practice using the test features.
- While it may take time to ensure that every school has the hardware necessary and meets the technology requirements, this is a smart investment. Technology is not going away. Ensuring that all students have access to technology is critical to preparing students for a 21st century workforce.

11. What accommodations are available for English Language Learners (ELL) or students with disabilities?

- Since the Smarter Balanced assessments are administered online, they offer a variety of accessibility features for students who need them. Students will be able to access dictionaries, spell checkers, highlighters, line readers, calculators, and many other features. Glossaries are available in 10 different languages. With previous state assessments, accommodations such as needing to read aloud or use of a scribe had to be provided by school personnel. Now students can access all of the necessary accommodations within the test itself.

12. Where can I go for more information?

- www.smarterbalanced.org
- www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=3298
- www.BusinessForCore.org