



Standardized testing in schools: Information for Families

Standardized testing in schools is frequently a topic of public discussion. Portland Public Schools would like your family to be fully informed about what standardized tests mean for your student and your school.

A key learning tool

Oregon's statewide assessments (state tests) are taken by students in grades 3-8 and 11 to assess English-Language Arts, math and science.

Starting this spring, new tests – called Smarter Balanced Assessments – will replace the old Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills tests in math and English-Language Arts. The new tests assess what students are learning under the new Common Core State Standards. New science tests will follow when PPS has fully implemented the Common Core State Standards in science.

The Smarter Balanced tests:

- **Show how well students have learned the academic content and habits of mind** laid out in the Common Core State Standards that are designed to prepare students for college and careers. This information can help students, teachers and schools tailor instruction to be sure all students are learning what they need to learn.
- **Measure how well schools are serving students.** The state records test results for each student as well as for each school as a whole. The state also tracks how many students take the tests, requiring that 95 percent of a school's students take the tests at every grade the tests are offered. The state downgrades the ranking of schools at which not enough students take the tests. Families often use schools' test results and rankings when choosing where to send their children, and the school district and state use the information to decide which schools need specific attention or investment to raise achievement.
- **Are more engaging, interactive and "real-world" than previous tests** and help parents and students identify academic areas, skills or habits of mind that students need more practice on.

A requirement for graduation

- In Oregon, students are required to show mastery in key areas to graduate from high school. Most high school students show mastery by meeting the benchmark on the state tests.
- Taking the tests in earlier grades prepares students to successfully show their mastery and meet graduation requirements in high school.
- Students are required to take the state tests unless they qualify for an exemption.

Exemptions

State law allows for students to opt out of the tests for only two reasons: for disability or religious reasons. Parental permission is required for a student to opt-out of a test.

Learn more

Learn more about testing, including student exemptions, at www.ode.state.or.us/home or talk with the principal at your school. Learn more about the Smarter Balanced Assessments at www.pps.net, search "Common Core," or at www.smarterbalanced.org.

If you have additional questions, contact Joe Suggs, Director of PPS Research, Evaluation & Assessment, jsuggs@pps.net or 503-916-3341. Spanish, 503-916-3582. Vietnamese, 503-916-3584. Russian, 503-916-3583. Chinese, 503-916-3585. Somali, 503-916-3586.