



Student assessments: Participation matters

Dear PPS Families,

Under the leadership of Superintendent Guerrero, PPS is focused on improving the quality and consistency of instruction, and on using data to inform our educational decisions. We are in the beginning stages of building the necessary systems to support our teachers and to provide core curriculum and instructional standards that we believe will lead to better student outcomes.

In order to focus instructional resources where they are most needed, we must have a method to determine where there are gaps in learning. This kind of information is critical for PPS to make improvements needed to raise the level of student success. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) has adopted an effective tool to gather data about how well students are learning. The Smarter Balanced Assessments, or SBAC, is available to grades 3-8 and grade 11. The SBAC is just one tool used by PPS to gather this kind of information. PPS uses a comprehensive framework of quality assessments designed to provide data across all grades.

A balanced assessment system offers all students, especially historically underserved students, opportunities to demonstrate their progress. Ultimately, a balanced assessment system creates a shared understanding among educators and a more transparent process for parents to access and understand their student's progress throughout their educational career.

PPS will begin administering the SBAC from February through May 2019 with a renewed focus on increasing the number of students who participate. The SBAC is an annual measure of progress that gives our teachers and administrators the ability to view growth across multiple years and against other districts, both in Oregon and nationally.

Ideally, students will gain specific knowledge and skills at each grade level. If SBAC results demonstrate that students are not meeting these standards, we will explore why and make the necessary adjustments for improvements at a district-wide level. In addition to providing the district with data, increasing the participation rates impacts school ratings assigned by ODE each year. ODE uses the SBAC scores to rate each school and ratings are used to determine where additional support is most needed.

Classroom teachers will continue to test their student's mastery of subjects throughout the school year in order to adjust their lessons and provide additional support to students where needed. These types of assessments are most useful for short-term instructional adjustments in the classroom.

In Oregon, parents may choose an opt-out for their students for state assessments in math and English. Additionally, parents may exempt their students from other state assessments for reasons of student disability or religious beliefs. Additional information regarding exemptions and opt-out is available here: <https://www.pps.net/Page/1651>. While PPS respects a parent's right to request an opt-out for their student, we strongly believe the SBAC provides critical data that can be used to improve student achievement.

Your students' academic success is my highest priority and I want you to have access to all of the facts before tests are administered.

Sincerely,

Dr. Yvonne Curtis

Deputy Superintendent, Instruction and School Communities