

## Smarter Balanced test offers new challenges

Every year, students in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11 are tested in math and English language arts. Test time is rapidly approaching.

The state has a new test this year to measure students' knowledge of state standards in these subjects. It's called the Smarter Balanced test and it replaces the OAKS Test.

The Smarter Balanced test measures student progress toward new learning standards that are designed to prepare students for college and career. New standards require a new test.

### A different test

The test-taking experience will be very different for students. For example:

- The test is longer, so students need stamina to stick with it all the way to the end.
- There's a lot of writing in both the math and language arts tests.
- Because it's taken on a computer, students will need to know how to type on a keyboard.
- There's only one opportunity to take the test each year, but students have several hours to complete it. It's important that they take their time and be careful when answering the test questions.
- Students who participated a field test of the Smarter Balanced test said it is more interesting than OAKS.

Because the test is new and different, we expect it will take students a while to adjust. This means that students who may have done well on the old OAKS test may not do as well on the Smarter Balanced test at first. This is normal when tests change. Students will adjust with time.

### How to help your student prepare

Parents can help their students transition to the Smarter Balanced test by doing a few simple things at home that support the work taking place in the classroom. Our school will be sending home "Parents' Tips for Testing" in the coming weeks.

Here are some ways to help your student be successful on the Smarter Balanced test:

- Take practice tests – find a link to tests here: <http://www.skgradguide.com/doing/state-tests>
- Practice typing skills –
  - For elementary students: <http://www.skpselementarytechnology.com>
  - For secondary students: <http://www.typingweb.com>

### Keep it in perspective

It's important to encourage your student to relax and give the test their best effort. State tests provide feedback to the State about how our schools are helping students reach state standards, and provide teachers with information on how students are learning. But remember, performance on the state test

alone doesn't reflect a student's overall growth or achievement level. State tests are important, but they are just one of many data points teachers use to gauge student learning.

**For more information**

If you would like to know more about the Smarter Balanced test, please visit the Oregon Department of Education website, <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=3298>