

A Family Guide To Your Child's Smarter Balanced Assessment Results

This past spring, your child took new statewide assessments in math and English language arts called Smarter Balanced. They were designed to match the new, more rigorous state standards that focus on the critical thinking, problem solving and reasoning skills students need in today's world.

As teachers and students work on mastering these more complex skills, educators expect that in this first year, scores may appear different than on the previous state test for many students. Although these new assessments cannot be compared to the old state tests, this year's score provides an accurate picture of a student's academic achievement level. These assessments are only one of several measures including classroom assignments, grades, and conversations with teachers that should be used to better understand if your child is on track to succeed in the next grade.

What should I take away from the assessment results?

- The Smarter Balanced Assessment helps you understand your child's academic progress and achievement. In addition to giving you an overall score in math and English, it also breaks down each subject into categories to provide you with a better understanding of how your child performed in different areas of math and English.

What does my child's assessment score mean?

- The Smarter Balanced assessment measures how well your child is performing against the new learning standards that guide instruction in English and math. Your child received an overall score, which is reported in one of four levels, with one being the lowest. Students who score in Level 3 or above have met the standard of the grade level in that subject. If your child scored at Level 2, he or she may need additional support or practice. Students scoring at Level 1 will need substantial support to fully comprehend the skills and concepts in that subject this school year.

Why does my child's score look different than scores on previous assessments?

- This first year's assessment scores set a new baseline from which progress will be measured. Your child's score, as well as the school and district results, may look lower this year because the assessment measured more complex skills including critical thinking, problem solving and analyzing. A low score does not mean your child did not improve or learned less. It simply means that the expectations have been raised for students. These scores cannot be compared to previous test scores since they are focusing on different skills.

What resources are available to help my child?

- **Skill Builder:** Contains helpful resources for you to support your child in Math and English at home. <http://bealearninghero.org/skill-builder>
- **PTA:** See an overview of the learning goals and suggested activities for your child in every grade and state by state assessment guides. <http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3816>

How will my child's score be used?

- Scores will be used, with other measures, to better tailor instruction to individual student needs and to determine how well a school, district and the state is doing against the higher standards and helping students learn.

What if my child did well on his or her report card last year, but not as well on the assessment?

- Smarter Balanced is only one of several measures that are used to determine your child's academic performance. Report card grades include multiple sources of information, including participation, work habits, group projects and homework, all of which are important in determining a child's academic achievement. These sources are not reflected on the assessment, so there may be some differences. To further explore your child's academic achievement, talk with his or her teacher.

What types of questions were asked?

- To see a walk-through of a practice test, visit <http://nh.portal.airast.org/training-tests/>.
- The Smarter Balanced Assessment includes performance tasks, which are multi-step assignments that ask students to apply their knowledge and skills to address real-world problems. In English, students have to apply their research and writing skills, and in math, they will solve a complex problem and then describe and defend their reasoning. The assessment also included traditional multiple choice questions, as well as interactive questions that required students to drag and drop their answers into a box, create equations, and fill in the answer.

How can I use these assessment results to help my child improve?

- Your child's performance is broken down into categories in each subject. You can use this information to locate activities online that were designed specifically for each category at every grade level. You can also use the results to guide a discussion with your child's teacher(s) about additional supports or challenges that may be needed in class, as well as other ways to support your child at home.

Frequently Asked Questions about Smarter Balanced Assessment Results

Question	Response
<p>Is this a new assessment? Why did we change?</p>	<p>The Smarter Balanced Assessment was new this past spring and replaced the NECAP in English language arts and mathematics. The new assessment is aligned to the New Hampshire College- and Career-Ready Standards, which set clear, consistent guidelines for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in math and English language arts. The new assessment provides a more accurate indicator of whether students are on track for the next grade level and more detailed information about student progress.</p>
<p>What subjects and grades are assessed?</p>	<p>Students in grades 3-8 and 11 took the Smarter Balanced assessments in English language arts/literacy and math.</p>
<p>What's different about the Smarter Balanced Assessment?</p>	<p>This assessment asks students to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and skills in areas such as critical thinking, analytical writing and problem solving. The assessment includes performance tasks – multi-step assignments that ask students to address real-world problems. In English, students have to apply their research and writing skills, and in math, they will solve a complex problem and then describe and defend their reasoning.</p> <p>The assessment is computer-adaptive, adjusting to a student's learning level by giving harder or easier questions based on how well he or she is doing. This is more interactive and less frustrating for students because they are appropriately challenged throughout the assessment.</p>
<p>What score indicates that students are on track?</p>	<p>Through our work with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, New Hampshire is administering a high-quality assessment that has benefited from input from classroom teachers, principals, curriculum directors and other educators, as well as experts and state education agency staff from New Hampshire and across the country.</p> <p>The student assessment results establish a new baseline that enables all of us to know where students stand on their path to success in college and career. We are committed to ensuring that all students are prepared with the critical thinking, problem solving and reasoning skills that they need to be successful in life.</p> <p>Students scoring at an Achievement Level of 3 or 4 have met the standard of the grade level in the subject matter. Students scoring at level 1 or 2 did not meet the standard and will require varying levels of support to grasp the skills and concepts this school year.</p>

<p>Why do the scores look different than scores from the NECAP?</p>	<p>These new assessments are designed to challenge students, so it's not surprising the results are different from previous years. What's important to remember is that the results represent a new baseline that teachers and parents can use to measure progress toward college and career readiness. Lower assessment scores do not necessarily mean that schools are performing worse, or that students are learning less, but is a reflection of the higher standards New Hampshire adopted to ensure that all of its students are college- and career-ready. As with any change, there is a period of transition as teachers and students get used to the new standards and assessments.</p>
<p>What can teachers do with the results?</p>	<p>Our dedicated teachers are focused on helping all students succeed. These scores are one of many factors that provide teachers with feedback as to how they can better meet the needs of the students in their classrooms. Districts will work with teachers to reflect on their practices and strengthen instruction through continued professional development and collaboration. Teachers can also use the information in the score reports to guide instruction. Students' scores in the math and English language arts/literacy categories provide information about what additional evidence a teacher should gather in the classroom to make decisions about next steps for teaching and learning.</p>
<p>What can schools do with the results?</p>	<p>Having accurate and descriptive information about student achievement is an important part of ensuring that our schools are providing all students with a quality education. The assessment results will help schools improve instruction, strategically support teachers and assess school performance as compared with other schools across our state and country.</p>
<p>What can parents do with the results?</p>	<p>The assessment results will include a breakdown of your child's performance in categories within each subject. Parents can use this information to better understand where their child needs additional practice or to be challenged by going deeper into a subject. They can use the results to work with teachers to identify strategies to improve student performance and discuss ways to support their child at home. For example, tutoring or after-school programs may be available to help students practice their skills.</p>
<p>What can parents do to help their children?</p>	<p>Parents are essential to a child's success. By using the assessment results to guide a discussion with their child's teacher, they can identify ways of supporting their child both in and outside the classroom. For example, teachers may be able to recommend reading strategies that parents can practice at home with their child.</p>
<p>Is there a listing of school or district state testing scores available?</p>	<p>All school and district data will be available publically on the NH Department of Education's website under New Hampshire School and District Profiles (http://my.doe.nh.gov/profiles/) by November, 2015.</p>

<p>How many parents refuse to let children participate in the assessments?</p>	<p>We all want what is best for students, and part of that is to have a clear picture where they are academically so we can do our best in educating them. When students do not participate in these assessments, we lose a key measure of how students are doing: whether they need more help or if they should be challenged more. By November (2015), the NH Department of Education will report on the participation rate for the first implementation of the Smarter Balanced Assessment.</p>
<p>How do parental refusals impact district scores?</p>	<p>These new assessments are important in measuring how kids are doing because it's one reflection of how well students are progressing against higher standards and how effectively teachers are instructing the content and skills they outline. If the number of students taking the assessments drops, we won't have the information we need to fully inform teachers, schools, districts and the state of how children are performing and to hold schools and the state accountable for results. At the same time, students refusing to take the state assessment can offset average scores – either increasing the average or decreasing the average for the school, district and/or state.</p>
<p>How are you keeping student data safe?</p>	<p>Protecting student privacy and data is a top priority and New Hampshire has some of the most stringent privacy laws in the country (please see NH RSA 193-C:11; 193-E and 189:65-68). The state retains control over student information and does not release any personally identifiable student information. All data collection adheres to all federal and state privacy laws, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).</p>