

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.