

ASSESSMENTS MATTER



Assessments provide parents and teachers with important information about how a child is progressing. It's important for parents, education leaders and policymakers to know how our kids and our schools stack up against others in the state, nation and world. There are many reasons why assessments matter and students should take tests.

Taking tests is a part of life.

Whether it's going to the doctor for an annual checkup or passing a driver's test to get a license, people take tests throughout their life. State testing is a critical annual academic checkup to make sure student learning is on track.

Graduation exams provide an important measure of basic skills.

High school tests, required of all students, ensure students graduate with a basic, foundational set of skills and knowledge that prepares them to pursue college and career opportunities.

Keeping kids from taking tests is not a solution.

If students refuse to take a test, parents and teachers will lose a key measure of how students are doing – whether they need more help or if their learning should be accelerated. We all want what's best for kids, and part of that is honestly knowing where kids are academically.

Refusing to take tests creates greater inequity in our education system.

New state data shows that school districts with the highest test refusal, or opt-out, rates for high school primarily come from wealthier, property-rich areas. In comparison, students in lower-income districts participated in testing in much higher numbers. If all students are not taking the tests, we won't know where to best target additional resources and support.

Smarter Balanced tests measure whether a student is on the path to college and career readiness.

The Smarter Balanced tests in grades 3-8 and high school measure the skills necessary for students be prepared for college or a career. These tests will help provide parents and teachers a better measure of what students need to know to be successful in today's economy.

Testing Fact

Since Washington first required students to pass state tests to earn a diploma, the state's HS graduation rate has risen from 72% to 78%.

The high school Smarter Balanced tests serve as a college placement exam.

High school students who score a Level 3 or above on the Smarter Balanced math and English language arts exams can enroll in college level courses without further testing. These college and career ready assessments provide students with a critical opportunity to avoid remedial, or high school level, courses at our state's two- and four-year colleges and universities.

Students have options if they score a Level 2 on a high school Smarter Balanced test.

Our state has designed Bridge to College transition courses that are designed to better prepare students for college-level coursework. Students who score a Level 2 on Smarter Balanced and receive a 'B' or better in a Bridge to College transition course will be placed in college-level courses without remediation at our state's 2-year colleges.

Our state is working to provide Bridge to College transition courses to more schools.

In 2015-16, 80 districts in Washington offered these courses. Scaling this program up to every high school will take a number of years. Talk to your school and district to see what they offer.

Districts and state testing takes up a small percentage of the school year.

Required district and state testing takes up about 20 hours out of a 1,000-hour school year, which equals 2%. Highline Public Schools compiled an [interesting infographic](#) to show testing time by grade.

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