

Essential Skills

Teacher Handout: Graduation Requirements

Oregon's Transition to Smarter Balanced Assessments:

With Oregon's transition from OAKS to the Smarter Balanced assessments in English language arts/literacy and math come questions regarding how new state tests may impact students' ability to satisfy graduation requirements and what test scores mean for students applying for postsecondary opportunities. This handout clarifies important points to communicate with students and their parents during this transition, and can be used in tandem with the **Essential Skills Parent FAQ** available at <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2042>.

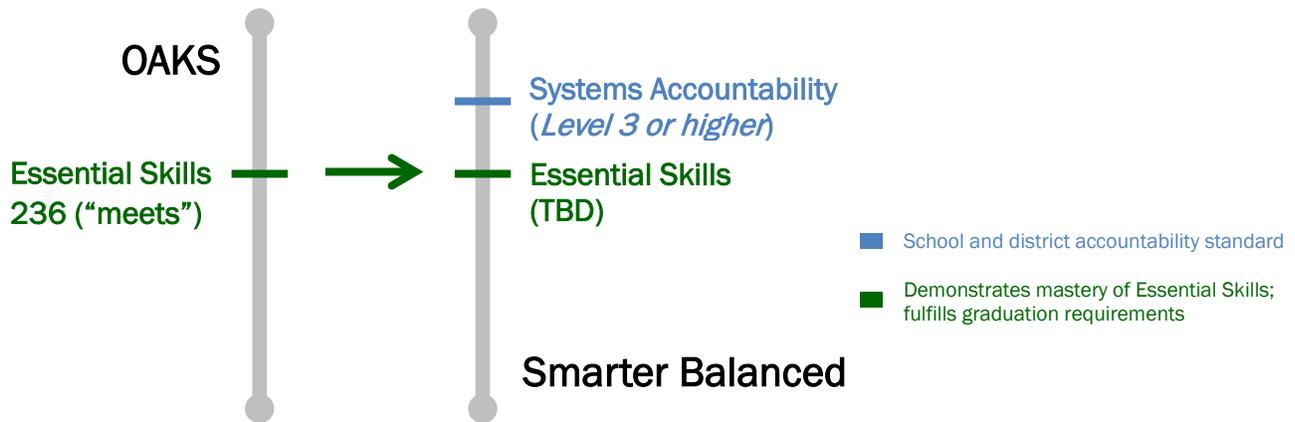
Talking Points

Students have options:

As always, students will still have a variety of assessment options to demonstrate their mastery of the reading, writing, and math Essential Skills, including state tests, other approved assessments, and work samples.

Graduation expectations have not changed:

While the Smarter Balanced assessments are more challenging than our previous state tests, students taking these new tests will only need to achieve a score that is equal to or higher than the "meets" score on our previous state tests. This score will be lower than the Level 3 "college- and career-ready" score reported on the School and District Report Card and linked to college placement.



The score on Smarter Balanced needed to meet the Essential Skills graduation requirements has not been determined yet:

The Essential Skills passing score (equal to "meets" on our previous state tests) will not be determined until Fall 2015. This means students will not know whether or not they have "met" graduation requirements when they first receive their Smarter Balanced scores. It is important to communicate that this is a natural part of the test development process and, by waiting, the Oregon Department of Education will have the information needed to make an accurate and fair decision regarding expectations for student performance.

Smarter Balanced test scores are linked to placement in Oregon community colleges and universities:

For at least the next two years, Oregon's 17 community colleges and 7 universities may choose to waive additional placement testing for entering students if they score a 3 or higher on Smarter Balanced tests and meet requirements for continued academic rigor during grade 12.*

*Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) news announcement:
<http://us3.campaign-archive2.com/?u=4594642efda13a6f682ce6914&id=e1d77a2415&e=c49bbfd968%20-%20Article%20>