

Frequently Asked Questions about Smarter Balanced Assessment Results

Question	Response
Is this a new assessment? Why did we change?	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.
What subjects and grades are assessed?	Students in grades 3-8 and 11 took the Smarter Balanced assessments in English language arts/literacy and math.
What's different about the Smarter Balanced Assessment?	<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>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>
What score indicates that students are on track?	<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 publicly 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>

How many parents refuse to let children participate in the assessments?	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.
How do parental refusals impact district scores?	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.
How are you keeping student data safe?	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).