

## Information Regarding Participation in State & District Assessments

Some students and parents believe too much testing is occurring in public schools and do not understand why testing is needed. As a result, they want to withdraw from testing. This document provides basic facts about the amount of time needed to take required assessments and some of the reasons testing occurs.

1. *The time required for a student to take the required state and district assessments is very minimal.*

- State testing requires parts of 4-5 days of testing per year for about half our students. Testing rarely covers an entire day and is usually done for a few hours in the morning or afternoon. The total amount of time required for most students to take the required English/language arts and math state tests amounts to about 2 full days, which is slightly more than 1% of the entire year. Most students in K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade have no required state testing at all.
- Students who are learning English are screened for English language instruction, and those who are not proficient in English are required to take an additional assessment that takes about 2 hours.
- Certain grades and students have more testing than others. Besides the Smarter Balanced English/language arts and math assessments given in grades 3-8 and once in high school, students in grades 5, 8, and 11 must take a state science assessment. The science assessments each take about 2 hours.
- None of the state tests are timed. The average amount of time spent per day on Smarter Balanced testing is about three hours.
- Students need 1-2 hours of practice to become familiar with how to take the test on a computer.
- Many subjects do not have any state testing. There is no required standardized test for students in social studies, health/fitness, the arts, and world languages.
- Students with significant cognitive disabilities do not test. Instead, they have a portfolio or other information to document their growth on key learning targets several times during the year to show their progress toward state standards.
- High school students taking Advanced Placement assessments have the option to take exams that take 2 hours to complete. Students can earn college credit and meet graduation requirements by passing these tests.
- The district has reduced the amount of required testing and has few required assessments. Students in grades K-8 are required to take a short (20-30 minutes) “screening” STAR test in September in both reading and math. Students in grades K-5 are also required to take the STAR again in the spring. Some students who score below grade must take the test at the end of each grading period so teachers can monitor their progress (this meets a state requirement). Some students who perform very well have the option to take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) to see if they qualify for a highly capable program. Individual schools may require other assessments to be given in the classroom to provide teachers with more information about what their students know and can do.

2. *Students and parents gain valuable information from the results of the required state assessments.*

- The Smarter Balanced assessments are the only standardized tests given to assess the Common Core state curriculum standards in English/language arts and math. These tests assess knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and relate to higher-level thinking, communication, reasoning, problem solving, and the application of knowledge and skills in new situations. The rigor of the scores required to pass the tests is aligned with college- and career-ready standards. Results from these assessments provide information about how prepared students are to meet some of the key demands they will face in the future.

- By taking Smarter Balanced Assessments in grades 3-8, students become familiar with the test and have several chances to get feedback on their performance before taking the test that can be used to meet a graduation requirement in high school. Each student's test performance provides a profile of the student's stronger and weaker areas in each subject area tested. Students also need to become familiar with the rigor and technology related to the various assessments, including formative assessments that are available for use in the classroom during the year.
3. *Educators need good information about student performance to make good decisions. Students who refuse to take a required assessment will not generate results about what they know and can do, which hinders educators and policymakers from making good decisions.*
- Educators need to use multiple measures to get an accurate understanding of student performance so they can teach better and know how well students are learning. Having all students take the same test in the same (standardized) manner provides valuable information about student performance. Having results from these assessments provides teachers and staff with information about whether students are on track to meet these standards and helps them plan instruction accordingly.
  - Because the state assessment measures students' progress toward meeting standards, information regarding the performance of individuals and groups of students can help district staff make decisions about the effectiveness of various instructional programs. Educators use state test results to make decisions related to student placement, student eligibility for specialized programs, program effectiveness, goal setting, system accountability, and monitoring student progress over time. In addition, the state needs accurate student performance data to establish well-designed policies, including scores used for high school graduation purposes. If students do not take the state assessment and complete results are not available, teachers and staff lack full information about their instructional needs, which could lead to some students not receiving all the instructional support they might need to be successful later in school. Without complete information, state educators and stakeholders lack important information needed to make informed decisions.
4. *Refusing to take a required test has negative consequences for students, teachers, schools, the district, parents, and the community.*
- Students must achieve a certain score on various types of assessments (or pass certain courses) to meet the state's new graduation requirement and earn a high school diploma. Students need experience taking assessments to become familiar with the testing system and gain confidence for when they take the high school assessments. Students who do not take required state assessments in earlier grades jeopardize their chances of graduating because they are less familiar with the testing system, and they may develop anxiety about testing in general.
  - Washington's public 2-year colleges use high school test scores to determine college readiness and course placement for their applicants. Students meeting standard (Level 3 or higher) are considered "college ready" and can automatically take entry-level courses in their first year of college (they do not need to take a placement test). Students not taking a high school assessment may be required to take a college readiness test before being placed in a credit-bearing course.
  - Test scores are used for school accountability, which includes awards for high performers and additional requirements for low performers. The measures used in these determinations often use multiple years of data (e.g., a 3-year average). Schools with large numbers of students who do not take a test (and who are counted as not meeting standard) are more likely to face additional federal and state requirements for several years and may not be considered for state and federal awards. The federal and state education systems require extra reporting and eliminate schools from receiving awards when more than 5% of the students do not take a required assessment.

- Public support for our state and local education systems depends on accurate information, and families often use test results when making decisions about where to live and what schools to attend. Students who do not take the test are considered not meeting standard in the school and district results reported to the public, and the school and district results decline based on the percentage of students who do not take the test. Public perceptions about the educational quality of a school and district may be affected by declining scores.
  - Parents who want to know what test questions their child took can submit a request to the state to view their child’s answers to gain a deeper understanding of what their child knows and can do. When testing does not occur, parents are not able to get a good understanding of how well their student is performing on the new standards and whether the student is on track to be prepared for college or a career. Parents have a right to know how well their children perform on the assessments and if they meet state expectations.
5. *Federal and state laws require public schools to administer assessments to students enrolled in the specified grades and subjects. The state expects educators to meet state requirements.*
- State legislation outlined in RCW 28A.655.070 mandates the administration of the Washington state assessment. The state’s Winter 2015 Assessment Coordinators Manual states that “encouraging students to be absent from tests used for accountability” is a prohibited behavior. The disregard of professional practices associated with the assessment of students may be considered unprofessional conduct (WAC 180-87-060). Educators are expected to create a positive and supportive testing atmosphere and help students show what they know and can do.
6. *Parents may refuse to allow their children participate in a required assessment. The state requires the school to request that the refusal be put in writing and explain the reason for the refusal.*
- Each school has a district form that parents need to complete when they do not want their child to take a required test. School personnel are responsible to make sure parents and students understand all the implications and consequences of a refusal.

For more information about required assessments in the Mukilteo School District, contact the school test coordinator or the district Assessment Office at 425-356-1218 or [Assessment@mukilteo.wednet.edu](mailto:Assessment@mukilteo.wednet.edu).