



WA OPT IN
FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FAQs



What are Common Core State Standards?

To help students on the pathway for success after high school, Washington state adopted the Common Core State Standards, which define what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in math and English language arts.

What are Smarter Balanced assessments?

We measure how students and schools are performing in meeting the standards with Smarter Balanced assessments. Smarter Balanced is a computer-based assessment system that measures deeper knowledge and skills that are important to each student's future, including problem-solving, writing and critical thinking.

How are Smarter Balanced assessments scored and what do the scores mean?

Smarter Balanced assessment scores fall into one of four levels. Students receive a score for math and a score for English language arts. A level 3 or 4 score is one way of demonstrating a student is on track for college and career readiness. A level 1 or 2 score means a student might need extra help, motivation and planning to be college and career ready after high school.

What does being college and career ready mean?

Being college and career ready means students have the skills to qualify for and to succeed in credit-bearing colleges courses or on-the-job training that's necessary for their chosen career.

Why do students need to be college and career ready?

By 2018, more than 70 percent of jobs in Washington will require a postsecondary degree or certificate. Less than 40 percent of Washington students have college degrees. To take advantage of these opportunities and have a life filled with options, students need a quality education to successfully pursue college and career pathways. Smarter Balanced is a tool that lets teachers and families know how students are doing and when they might need extra help along their path to a high school diploma and postsecondary degree or certificate.

How do Smarter Balanced scores help students, teachers and families?

Teachers and families want what's best for students, and Smarter Balanced assessments let them know where students need help and how to support them.

Smarter Balanced gives students, teachers and families better information on how students and schools stack up against others in the state, nation and world. The assessments also show how to best help students succeed, to avoid remedial classes in college, or take more challenging courses on their pathway to be ready for college or the career they choose after graduation.

How can students stay on track to graduate career and college ready if they score a Level 3 or 4?

Students who score a Level 3 or above on Smarter Balanced can qualify for credit-bearing courses in college and avoid the cost and time of remedial, or high school level, courses in college. To stay on this path, they can pursue challenging coursework, review their High School and Beyond Plan with their parents, teachers and counselors throughout high school, and earn college credit and reduce costs through programs like Running Start, Advanced Placement or other dual-credit options.

If a student scored below a Level 3 on Smarter Balanced, can they still go to college?

Definitely! Students who scored a Level 1 or a 2 can still become college and career ready, but they will need some extra help before graduation. They can check in with their counselors, teachers and family to see what opportunities they can explore, like a Bridge to College transition course in 12th grade or attending tutoring offered by their school or a community organization. There are plenty of opportunities available to help get them back on the college-and career-ready track.

What happens if a student doesn't take the Smarter Balanced assessment?

If students don't take the Smarter Balanced assessment, then schools, teachers and families will not have the full picture on how students are progressing in their learning, where they need help and if they can pursue more challenging classes. In high school, the Smarter Balanced English language arts exam is required to pass to earn a diploma. The same will soon be required for the Smarter Balanced math exam. Additionally, students lose a critical opportunity to avoid high school-level courses in college with a Smarter Balanced math and English language score. Taking high school-level courses in college costs time and money and doesn't earn credits toward a college diploma.

