



# THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

*A high-quality education system that prepares all students for college, career, and life.*

## SETTING MINIMUM GRADUATION SCORES ON NEW HIGH SCHOOL MATH AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ASSESSMENTS

### Outline

- 1) Policy Considerations
- 2) The Transition to Common Core Assessments
- 3) Background
  - a) Past Work of The Board
  - b) High School Common Core Assessments
    - i) *Smarter Balanced Assessments*
    - ii) *Math End-of-Course Exit Exams*
    - iii) *High School Assessment Options for Students Served by Special Education*
- 4) Specific Requirements of EHB 1450
  - a) The Transition Experience of Washington Students to the Consortium-developed Assessments
    - i) *Refusals and the Experience of 11<sup>th</sup> Graders*
    - ii) *Technology*
    - iii) *Delays in Receiving Scores*
    - iv) *A Range of Voices Concerning New Standards and New Tests*
  - b) Student Scores Used in Other States that are Administering the Consortium-developed Assessments
  - c) Scores In Other States That Require Passage of an Eleventh Grade Assessment as a High School Graduation Requirement
- 5) Overview of Spring 2015 Testing Results and Impact on Establishing Minimum Graduation Scores
- 6) Action

### 1) Policy Considerations

The State Board of Education (SBE) will consider approval of scores for high school graduation on:

1. The high school comprehensive Smarter Balanced English Language Arts (ELA) assessment
2. The high school comprehensive Smarter Balanced math assessment

The SBE will also consider approval of achievement level scores on:

3. The Math Year 1 end-of-course (EOC) exit exam that is aligned to new standards
4. The Math Year 2 EOC exit exam that is aligned to new standards

In addition, the Board will consider approval of cut-scores for assessment options for students served by special education

5. WA-AIM

**2) The Transition to Common Core Assessments**

The Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and math were adopted for Washington state in 2011. Since then, Washington school districts have been working to phase in teaching and learning of the new standards and the state, as part of the Smarter Balanced Consortium, has been working on the development of new assessments aligned with the standards. Items from the Smarter Balanced assessments were field-tested in 2013-2014, and the first full administration of the tests was this past spring of 2015.

For Washington, the transition to new assessments required for graduation presented a challenge in three dimension. The former system of high school assessments required for graduation included a combination of EOCs for math and comprehensive reading and writing assessments for ELA. These assessment requirements were completed by most students by the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The new Smarter Balanced high school assessments are comprehensive in ELA and math and are administered for federal accountability in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. So the transition involves change, in 1) the type of assessment, 2) the number of assessment and 3) the grade at which most students will complete the requirement.

In 2013, the Legislature met the challenge through EHB 1450, codified in RCW 28A.305.130 (Appendix E of this memo). The bill established the new Smarter Balanced assessments in ELA and math as the tests required for high school graduation. Students who pass all assessments required for graduation earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement (CAA). EHB 1450 directed that the Smarter Balanced assessments are the primary means, in ELA and math, for students in the Class of 2019 and beyond to earn a CAA. Prior to the Class of 2019, additional assessment options to earn a CAA are available to students.

EHB 1450 directed OSPI to develop a new transition 10<sup>th</sup> grade assessment in ELA aligned to the new standards by using Smarter Balanced test items to replace the former Reading and Writing High School Proficiency Exams (HSPE). To meet this requirement OSPI decided to simply administer the ELA Smarter Balanced in 10<sup>th</sup> grade during the transition to new assessments, as well as in 11<sup>th</sup> grade for federal accountability. Since the Common Core Standards are not aligned to single grade levels, and since the Smarter Balanced test was developed to address the full range of high school standards, the Smarter Balanced test may appropriately be given to 10<sup>th</sup> graders. The Smarter Balanced is not an “11<sup>th</sup> grade exam.” Students in 11<sup>th</sup> grade should perform better than 10<sup>th</sup> graders because they have had an additional year of instruction, but the Smarter Balanced may be used for 10<sup>th</sup> grade students to demonstrate their achievement.

EHB 1450 also directed OSPI to develop new transition math EOCs, aligned to the new standards, for use during the transition to new standards and assessments.

Table 1 summarizes how most students will demonstrate meeting standard on high school assessments, and for which tests the SBE will be setting a minimum graduation score at the August 2015 special meeting. The minimum graduation scores set by the Board on the ELA Smarter Balanced assessment and the transition EOC exit exams will be used by the Class of 2017, the 10<sup>th</sup> graders who took these tests in spring 2015. The minimum graduation score for the math Smarter Balanced assessment will primarily be used by the Class of 2019, the incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders, who will take the test as 11<sup>th</sup> graders in spring 2018. The math Smarter Balanced assessment may also be used as an alternative assessment for the Classes of 2016, 2017 and 2018.

For each of these new exams new minimum graduation scores must be established. State law directs the SBE to set the scores needed to show proficiency on state assessments and the scores for high school students to earn a CAA (RCW 28A.305.130, appendix A of this memo). The SBE also sets minimum graduation scores on approved alternatives to high school exit exams.

**Table 1:** Exit Exams in English Language Arts and Math That Most Students Will Use to Demonstrate Meeting Standard

Class of:	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Standards</b>	Old	Old	New	New	New
<b>English Language Arts</b>	HSPE	HSPE	◆ SBAC	SBAC	SBAC
<b>Math</b>	EOC	EOC	◆ EOC EXIT	EOC EXIT	◆ SBAC

HSPE-Reading and Writing High School Proficiency Exam

SBAC-Smarter Balanced Assessment

EOC-Math Year 1 and Math Year 2 End-of-Course Assessments aligned to the former Washington math standards

EOC EXIT-Math Year 1 and Math Year 2 End-of-Course Assessments aligned to the new Washington math standards, Common Core State Standards. These assessments are for use during the transition period to the new assessments.

◆ Tests for which the SBE will be establishing minimum graduation scores at the August meeting.

While the SBE has the statutory authority to set the minimum graduation scores, OSPI administers the assessment system, and OSPI staff have expertise in analyzing assessment data. The SBE and OSPI work together to set achievement levels and minimum graduation scores. Typically, OSPI staff propose a process for setting a score that the Board reviews and approves. Then, at a subsequent meeting OSPI staff present the resulting score for approval by the Board.

### 3) Background

#### a) Past Work of the Board

The Board has been very engaged in work on the assessment system for a number of years. The Board has extensively discussed new standards and assessments, and advocated for a deliberative and intentional transition, while maintaining focus on a meaningful high school diploma and career and college readiness for all students.

Table 2 summarizes and provides links to the work of the Board on the assessment system over the past three years, as the state worked to fully implementing the new standards and prepare for the new assessments.

The Board has explicitly expressed its position on assessments in a series of documents. On January 10, 2013, the SBE adopted a motion identifying the SBE’s position on assessments:

The State Board of Education (1) recognizes the state is in a time of transition with implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS); (2) strongly urges alignment and work with higher education so the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) 11th grade assessment would be meaningful in admissions and placement; (3) affirms exit exams as part of a meaningful high school diploma; (4) move towards exit exams consisting of: Algebra 1 EOC, Biology EOC, Reading and Writing transitioning to ELA (comprehensive SBAC 10th or 11th grade needs further exploration); and (5) more work to broaden Science assessment options (concerns about narrowing of curriculum through Biology EOC).

In addition, the Board established an intent in rule (WAC 180-17-100, adopted March 2014, Appendix B of this memo) that graduation requirements should ultimately align with career and college readiness, but that during the transition to new content standards and assessments, the graduation level should be a minimum proficiency standard rather than career and college readiness:

(e) The state's graduation requirements should ultimately be aligned to the performance levels associated with career and college readiness. During implementation of these standards, the board recognizes the necessity of a minimum proficiency standard for graduation that reflects a standard approaching full mastery, as both students and educators adapt to the increased rigor of common core and the underlying standard of career and college- readiness for all students.

In January 2015, the Board adopted a position on assessment (Appendix C) that reaffirmed exit exams as part of a meaningful high school diploma, and established an initial “equal impact” approach to setting minimum high school graduation scores on new assessments:

This approach will begin the process of moving toward the more rigorous SBAC college- and career-ready level by setting initial high school proficiency scores that would impact students in the next few years approximately equally to how students have been impacted by exit exams during the past few years. These initial minimum scores would be re-evaluated over the following years, as new standards are implemented and as more students gain the skills necessary to be SBAC College and Career Ready.

Based on this approach, OSPI developed a process for setting initial minimum graduation scores on the Smarter Balanced assessments and the transition math EOC exit exams (Appendix D).

**Table 2:** SBE’s work on Assessments During the Past Three Years

<b>Date</b>	<b>Board Activity</b>	<b>References and Links</b>
May 2012	OSPI presents to the Board and the Board discusses the transition to Common Core and Next Generation Standards and Assessments.	OSPI presentation on Next Five Years of State Assessment, Transitioning to New Assessments of New State Standards: What We Know So Far: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/2012.05.08-09%2011%20Common%20Core%20and%20Next%20Generation%20Science%20Standards.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/2012.05.08-09%2011%20Common%20Core%20and%20Next%20Generation%20Science%20Standards.pdf</a>
Aug. 2012	Standard setting for Biology EOC and WA Alternate Assessment System.	Board meeting materials: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/zarchivebm2012.php#Vbl5vzbn9mM">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/zarchivebm2012.php#Vbl5vzbn9mM</a>
Sept. 2012	Board discusses alternatives to certificate of academic achievement assessments.	SBE memo Review of Certificate of Academic Achievement Options for EOC Exams: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/2012.09.26%2012%20CAA.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/2012.09.26%2012%20CAA.pdf</a>
Nov. 2012	Board discusses assessment graduation requirements and considers the development of a position on assessments.	SBE memo Recommendations for a Career and College Ready Assessment System: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/2012.11.08%2016%20Assessments.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/2012.11.08%2016%20Assessments.pdf</a>
Jan. 2013	The Board approved a legislative priority on assessments.	SBE memo Consideration of an SBE Position Statement: Modifications to the State Assessment System to Support Career and College Readiness: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/2013.01.09%2007%20Assessments.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/2013.01.09%2007%20Assessments.pdf</a> Business items with the legislative priority on assessments: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/2013.01.09%2007%20Assessments.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/2013.01.09%2007%20Assessments.pdf</a>
Mar. 2013	Standard setting for Year 1 and Year 2 Math COEs.	Board meeting materials: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/zarchivebm2013.php#Vbl2azbn9mM">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/zarchivebm2013.php#Vbl2azbn9mM</a>
July 2013	Board discusses the state’s accountability framework, including the role of assessment.	Board memo on the Development of an Accountability Framework Pursuant to the Requirements of Senate Bills 5329 and 5491: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2013/07-10-2013_020AccountabilityFrameworkNew.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2013/07-10-2013_020AccountabilityFrameworkNew.pdf</a>

Mar. 2014	Board discusses Core to College and the use of the 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade SBAC by higher education, and approval of a letter to the Core to College Task Force. The Board also approves Accountability System Rules that describe an approach to the transition to new standards and assessments. The Board also approves the process for achievement level setting for the Biology COE and the Math Year 1 COE.	SBE Memo Draft Recommendations for the Use of the 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade Smarter Balanced Assessment: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/March/02ResponseToSBAC.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/March/02ResponseToSBAC.pdf</a> Letter to Core to College Task Force: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/March/ExhibitA_SBACfeedbackLetter.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/March/Exhibit A_SBACfeedbackLetter.pdf</a> Accountability System Rules: Appendix B of this memo
Aug. 2014	Achievement level setting for the Biology COE and the revisited achievement level setting for the Math Year 1 COE	Board Meeting Materials <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/zarchivebm2014.php#.VblbXjbn9mM">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/zarchivebm2014.php#.VblbXjbn9mM</a>
Sept. 2014	Board discussion about the high school assessment system.	September 2014 SBE Memo Assessments Required for High school Graduation: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/Sept/04Assessments1.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/Sept/04Assessments1.pdf</a> September 2014 OSPI Presentation to Board on History of Assessment System and Proposals for Future Assessments: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/Sept/OSPIassessmentPresentation1.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/Sept/OSPIassessmentPresentation1.pdf</a>
Nov. 2014	Board discusses approaches to setting a graduation level on the SBAC exams and establishes an ACT score equivalent to the Biology EOC. The Board also discussed and heard from Dr. Doug Kernutt on alternative assessments for graduation.	November 2014 SBE Memo Considerations in Establishing a Graduation Achievement Level on the High School Smarter Balanced Assessment: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/Nov/08CutScore.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/Nov/08CutScore.pdf</a> November 2014 OSPI Presentation to Board on Biology EOC ACT Equivalent and High School Graduation Exams: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/Nov/OSPIcutscores.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/Nov/OSPIcutscores.pdf</a> Memo by Dr. Doug Kernutt on Alternative Assessments for High School Graduation (part of the legislative priority section): <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/Nov/09LegislativePrioritiesUpdate2.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/Nov/09LegislativePrioritiesUpdate2.pdf</a>
Jan. 2015	The Board approves the use of SBAC achievement level threshold scores for use in Washington. The Board also approves an approach to setting the minimum graduation score in the Board's Position Statement on Assessments.	January 2015 SBE Memo Assessment Requirements for High School Graduation: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/Jan/03%20Assessment%20Requirements.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/Jan/03%20Assessment%20Requirements.pdf</a> January 2015 OSPI Video on the SBAC Achievement Level Threshold Scores: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2lKdoEXuM&amp;feature=youtu.be">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2lKdoEXuM&amp;feature=youtu.be</a> January 2015 SBE Position Statement on Assessments: Appendix C of this memo.
Mar. 2015	Based on the Board's position statement, OSPI presents and the Board approves an approach to setting the minimum graduation score. The Board discusses possible assessment alternatives for graduation.	Graduation Threshold Score Recommendation: Appendix D of this memo. OSPI video on Setting the Minimum Scores for Graduation on the New Exit Exams: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQszZ05keLA&amp;feature=youtu.be">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQszZ05keLA&amp;feature=youtu.be</a> SBE Memo Exploration of Assessment Alternatives for Graduation: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/Mar/03AssessmentAlternatives.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/Mar/03AssessmentAlternatives.pdf</a>
May 2015	Board approves a process for setting the WA-AIM achievement level score.	OSPI Video on WA-AIM Standard Setting: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-5u4o0Rg2AU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-5u4o0Rg2AU</a> WA-AIM Process Exhibit: Appendix F of this memo.
July 2015	Panel discussion by district and OSPI representatives about the implementation of SBAC testing.	Board Memo on Review of Smarter Balanced Implementation: <a href="http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/July/12SmarterBalanced.pdf">http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/July/12SmarterBalanced.pdf</a>

## **b) High School Common Core Assessments**

### ***i) Smarter Balanced Assessments***

The Smarter Balanced Assessments are comprehensive exams in ELA and Math. The expectation among consortium members is that the assessments will be given to students in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade for federal accountability. In Washington, as described in the Section 2, the Smarter Balanced ELA exam will also be given to 10<sup>th</sup> graders for three years (2015, 2016, and 2017), during the transition to the new assessments.

The Smarter Balanced Consortium determined threshold scores defining four achievement levels, with Levels 3 and 4 indicating career and college readiness. In March 2015, the Board approved the use of the achievement levels in Washington state.

### ***ii) Math End-of-Course Exit Exams***

There are two math EOCs for the first and second years of high school math. Year 1 content is Algebra 1/Integrated Math 1, and Year 2 content is Geometry/Integrated Math 2. For the transition to the new standards and assessments, the Legislature directed OSPI to develop new EOCs aligned to the new standards. The new EOC are the transition EOC exit exams that were developed with Smarter Balanced items. These transition EOC exit exams are the primary way that students in the Classes of 2017 and 2018 will demonstrate meeting standard in math (see Table 1). These exams will be discontinued and will not be used for the Class of 2019 and beyond.

### ***iii) High School Assessment Options for Students Served by Special Education***

Under RCW 28A.155.045, students who are not appropriately assessed by the regular high school assessment system, even with accommodations, may earn a certificate of individual achievement (CIA). The certificate may be earned using multiple ways to demonstrate skills and abilities corresponding to students' individual education programs (IEPs). The student's IEP team makes the determination of whether the state's high school assessment system is appropriate for the student based on the student's learning plan, post-secondary goals, and previous testing history. Making assessment decisions based on learner characteristics is a shift from prior state policy in which those determinations were based on whether the student was receiving special education services.

The change follows along with transitions in assessment for 2014-15. Students determined by their IEP teams to require alternative assessments to achieve a CIA will now be assessed through a system called WA-Access to Instruction & Measurement, or WA-AIM. WA-AIM is an alternate assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards in math and English language arts and to Essential Academic Learning Requirements in science for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

As OSPI's Director for Select Assessments explained in a [presentation](#) to the Board at the May meeting, WA-AIM has two components:

1. Access Point Frameworks (APs), aligned to the Common Core State Standards at grades 3-8 and high school, and developed from EALRs at grades five, eight and high school.
2. Performance Task Requirements, developed for alignment to the Access Point Frameworks.

WA-AIM is administered, in summary, as follows. A baseline performance task is used as a placement measure to ensure that a student assessed by WA-AIM is working at the correct Access Point level. Applying expert judgement to a student's knowledge and skills, teachers review the Access Point Frameworks and associated performance tasks and selected the performance task that a student is able to perform but has not yet mastered. If the student is able to make 75 percent correct responses or



higher, it's determined that the student should be assessed at the next higher Access Point. Assessments scores are generated from the final performance task. Teachers work one-on-one with students. Student performance is observed and documented, and scores are verified by a trained outside observer. (OSPI, May 2015).

The OSPI presentation provides specific examples of the AP Frameworks (i.e., the standards) and Performance Task Requirements, which are the measurable, observable performance related to the knowledge, skills and abilities detailed in the AP Frameworks.

New assessments require development of new standard setting. The SBE has the responsibility to set these achievement level scores under RCW 28A.305.130 for WA-AIM. Like other assessments aligned to Common Core State Standards, the WA-AIM is designed to have three cut scores established for four achievement levels: Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4.

On May 14, the Board voted to approve the proposed OSPI process for the setting of the achievement level scores for the WA-AIM (Appendix F of this memo). The process set in motion in spring of this year consisted of multiple steps in which special education teachers across Washington applied their expert judgment and professional experience to the task. In the final step, the Synthesis Discussion on July 16, a subset of teachers participating in the process reviewed the cut scores yielded by the previous steps and recommended a single, cohesive set of cut scores for the WA-AIM. The Board will be asked to approve the cut scores at its August 5 special meeting.

#### **4) Specific Requirements of EHB 1450**

EHB 1450 (codified in RCW 28A.305.130, Appendix A of this memo) specifically directs the SBE to set the minimum graduation scores on the high school Smarter Balanced exams and the math EOC exit exams to be used during the transition to the new assessments (see Table 1). The law (RCW 28A.305.130(4)(b)(iii)) directs that to determine the appropriate score on the Smarter Balanced assessment, the SBE will:

- Review the transition experience of Washington students to the consortium-developed assessments.
- Examine the student scores used in other states that are administering the consortium-developed assessments.
- Review the scores in other states that require passage of an eleventh grade assessment as a high school graduation requirement.

Each of these statutory requirements is discussed below. The following summarizes the Board's response meeting these requirements.

##### **a) The Transition Experience of Washington Students to the Consortium-developed Assessments**

The Board accessed multiple sources of information to meet the requirements to review the transition experience of Washington students to the Smarter Balanced assessments, including: student scores and participation data; representatives from districts and OSPI; public forums with teachers, students, parents, and members of the public; letters addressed to the Board; student Board members; public comment at Board meetings; press; work by consultant Dr. Doug Kernutt, and comments received on the SBE blog. These various sources displayed a wide range of experiences, information and opinions concerning the new assessments. Many reflect the transition experience of students. Some main themes and topics are summarized below.

### ***i) Refusals and the Experience of 11<sup>th</sup> Graders***

OSPI released preliminary data on participation in Smarter Balanced tests. These showed participation rates over 95% for grades 3 to 8, 93.6% for 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and a participation rate below 50% for 11<sup>th</sup> graders statewide. Participation by high school students varied around the state. In some districts it was very high, while in some districts it was very low. Some refusals (“opt-outs”) appeared to have been based on disagreement with state and federal testing policy. Some may have been based on inaccurate information given to students by educators or being passed between students: “I was told the test was optional.” “I had to fight to take the test because I was told it was unnecessary.”

Another factor that affected 11<sup>th</sup> grade scores may have been low motivation on the part of students who did take the test. Statewide, the scores of 11<sup>th</sup> graders are anomalously low in comparison to other states (see Figures 1 and 2), and in comparison to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade scores (Figure 3). Students report seeing other students “space-bar through the test” to finish quickly. Most 11<sup>th</sup> graders have already met the assessment graduation requirement through state tests they took in previous grades, so motivation to do well on the 11<sup>th</sup> grade Smarter Balanced test may have been diminished. This, along with negative messages some students received from their peers or their educators, may have contributed to both low participating and low achievement.

Clearly, the experience of 11<sup>th</sup> graders was different than for other grades. Refusals and motivation present a challenge to the system to better communicate with the field, with students and parents, and with the public. Lack of reliable 11<sup>th</sup> grade data impacts the ability of the SBE to set an appropriate minimum graduation score. It will be discussed in the “Overview of Spring 2015 Testing Results and Impact on Graduation Score Determination” section of this memo.

The Board’s student members discussing their experience taking the Smarter Balanced assessments is available in a video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB0drd7FEfc&feature=youtu.be>

OSPI conducted a student survey, and results of the survey will be presented to the Board at the August meeting.

### ***ii) Technology***

While a few technology issues were reported in the press, at the July 2015 SBE meeting, both district representatives and OSPI staff cited technology as a “win” in regards to the transition to the Smarter Balanced assessments. In general, due to hard work on the part of testing personnel at both the districts and the state, the implementation was generally considered smooth relative to past implementations of new assessments.

A limited number of computers in some districts limited student access to testing and extended the testing period. The disruption of instructional schedules should be reduced in the future if districts have sufficient technology capacity to test their students over a reasonably short testing window.

One district’s survey of students indicated that two thirds of students did not mind the computer platform, while one third of students stated they would prefer pencil-and-paper. Teachers reported that some students found the online platform confusing. A student Board member reported that having to scroll back-and-forth while writing an essay was distracting. Some of these challenges should lessen as the testing platform is refined, and as students become more used to online testing.

### ***iii) Delays in Receiving Scores***

The Board has heard from numerous teachers and district staff frustrated with the delay in receiving student scores. This negatively impacted the student experience, since if scores had been received earlier it would have allowed more planning by schools to address individual students’ needs through summer school or course planning. OSPI is working to address this contractor issues.



#### ***iv) A Range of Voices Concerning New Standards and New Tests***

In multiple venues, the Board heard from students, educators, parents and members of the public about testing and standards, many topics bearing on the student's experience of the transition to new assessments. Common messages expressing reservations about testing include:

- Testing causes anxiety for students.
- There are too many tests.
- There is miscommunication regarding the test.
- Instructional time is being lost to testing.
- Tests are changed too frequently.
- Some educators are teaching to the test.
- Access to computers and technology can limit student success on the assessment.
- Assessments are expensive and the benefit is not worth the cost.
- The individuality of students is not taken into consideration in the assessments.

The Board also heard support for high standards and specifically, support for setting a minimum graduation score of a Level 3, the Smarter Balanced career and college ready level, on the new tests.

- Student rise to high expectations.
- The state needs to show confidence that all students can be prepared for college and careers.
- Students with disabilities and at-risk students are the students who suffer when high standards are not set for all students.
- Without setting high standards the system will not be motivated to provide the support to get all students to a high level of achievement.

The comments on the SBE blog post on Smarter Balanced Assessments and Graduation Requirements provide an example of the range of comments received by the Board:

<https://washingtonsbe.wordpress.com/2015/07/06/smarter-balanced-assessments-and-graduation-requirements/>

#### **b) Student Scores Used in Other States that are Administering the Consortium-developed Assessments**

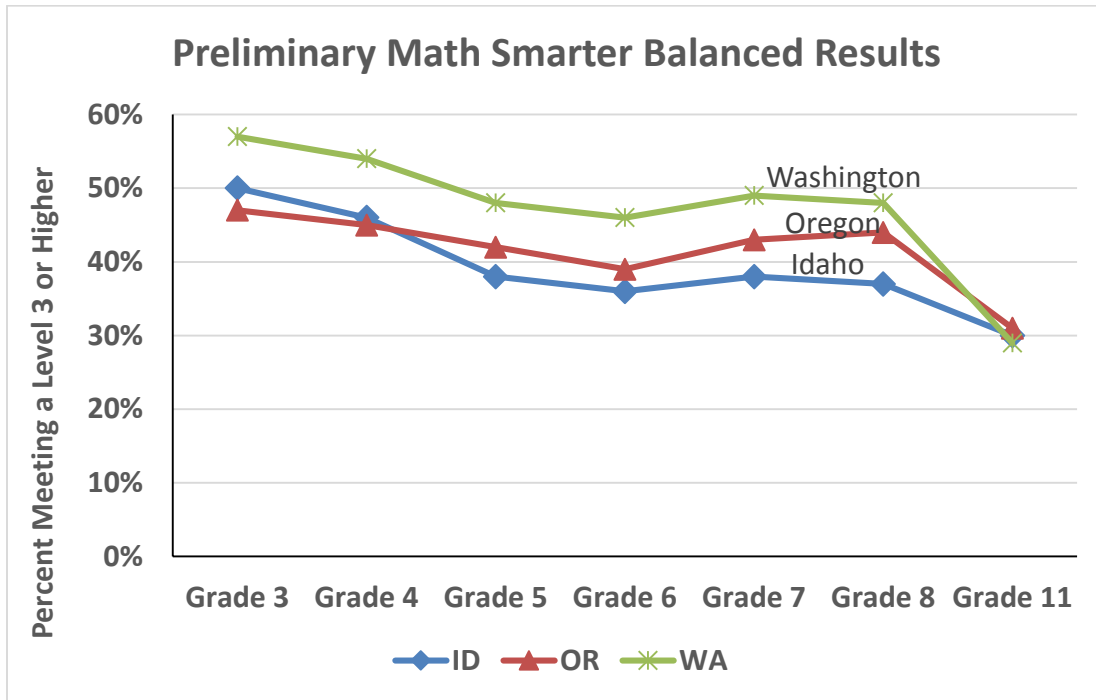
Of the states that use Smarter Balanced assessments (Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia), most do not have individual student stakes. Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and West Virginia do not require students to achieve a specific score on the assessments.

Oregon does not require students to pass the Smarter Balanced tests but passing the Smarter Balanced tests are one way to fulfill the Essential Skills requirement. This summer Oregon is establishing a scale score that represents an equivalent level of rigor to the standard of the current state exam, the OAKS. Idaho is planning on phasing in a passing score. The Class of 2018 will be required to pass at a 9<sup>th</sup> grade level, 2019 at 10<sup>th</sup>, and 2020 at 11<sup>th</sup>. However, the state decided this year to have 10<sup>th</sup> graders take the Smarter Balanced, so the plan for the class of 2020 is unclear.

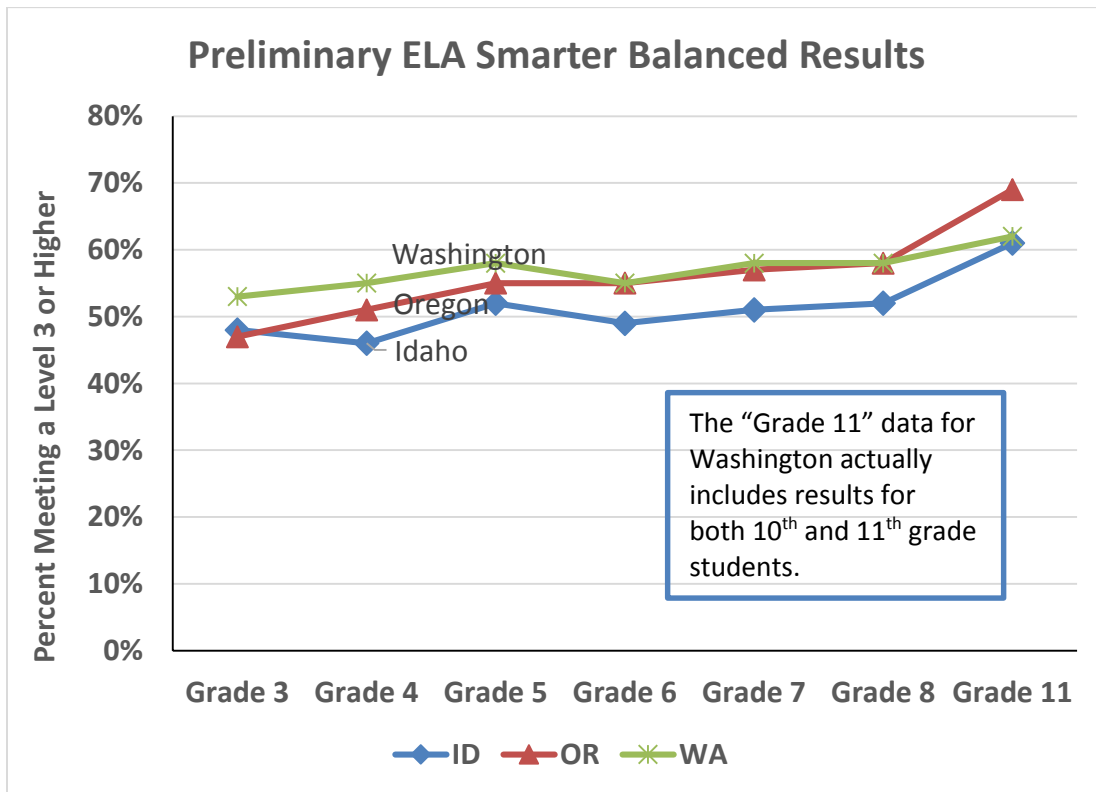
Preliminary results on the Smarter Balanced assessment have only been released by Washington, Oregon and Idaho. Preliminary results on the math Smarter Balanced (Figure 1) show Washington achieving at a higher level in grades three through eight, and then the performance significantly drops in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Despite Washington's strong math standards and performance as evidenced by performance at other grade levels and by NAEP results (Table 3), Washington falls lower compared to these neighboring states on the percentage meeting a Level 3 in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. With no reason to believe that the 11<sup>th</sup> grade cohort is uniquely and considerably lower-performing than other cohorts currently taking the Smarter Balanced in Washington, these results suggest that 11<sup>th</sup> grade math performance on the Smarter Balanced was exceedingly low for reasons beyond student math skill and knowledge. Other sections of this board packet consider the role of participation rates and motivation to take the test seriously as reasons why 11<sup>th</sup> grade performance on the math Smarter Balanced is so low. A conclusion that can be drawn from this comparison of states is that Washington's math performance on the Smarter Balanced can and should become higher at 11<sup>th</sup> grade in future years than it was in the 2014-2015 school year.

Preliminary results on the ELA Smarter Balanced (Figure 2) show Washington performing similarly to Oregon and Idaho. For Washington, the data for "11<sup>th</sup> grade" actually includes the results for both 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Unlike math, there is no steep drop in ELA performance in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. However, Washington's results do not spike upwards for high school as the neighboring states' do. This absence of an increase in percentage meeting Level 3 in high school ELA, and the plummet in performance on the 11<sup>th</sup> grade math Smarter Balanced relative to these neighboring states, suggests that Washington's 11<sup>th</sup> grade class perceived and handled the 11<sup>th</sup> grade assessment differently from cohorts taking the Smarter Balanced at other grade levels, and differently from their counterparts in neighboring states.

**Figure 1.** Preliminary Math Smarter Balanced Results for Washington, Oregon and Idaho.



**Figure 2.** Preliminary ELA Smarter Balanced Results for Washington, Oregon and Idaho.



**Table 2:** Comparison of 2013 NAEP results Washington, Oregon and Idaho

	4 <sup>th</sup> Gr. Math	8 <sup>th</sup> Gr. Math	4 <sup>th</sup> Gr. Reading	8 <sup>th</sup> Gr. Reading
<b>Washington</b>	246	290	225	272
<b>Oregon</b>	240	284	219	268
<b>Idaho</b>	241	286	219	270

These values are the average scores of each state on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) results from 2013 in reading and math at grades four and eight. This provides context to the relative performance levels of other states using the Smarter Balanced for student stakes. It could be expected that Washington would perform somewhat higher on the Smarter Balanced relative to Oregon and Idaho.

### **c) Scores In Other States That Require Passage of an Eleventh Grade Assessment as a High School Graduation Requirement**

Few other states require an 11<sup>th</sup> grade exit exam.<sup>1</sup> Nevada has an 11<sup>th</sup> grade exit exam, but it will be phased out with the class of 2016 and replaced with EOC exams. New Mexico requires the PARCC English III, which likely is tied to an 11<sup>th</sup> grade course. New Jersey has multiple options for exit exams, one of which is the PARCC English III. Florida has a tiered diploma, one of which requires an 11<sup>th</sup> grade ELA exam.

Math exit exams in other states are EOC exams, not tied to a particular grade level.

Due to limited comparability, other states' 11<sup>th</sup> grade exit exam policies do not greatly inform the Board's decision to set an appropriate minimum graduation score. Washington's exit exam policy and its commitment to career and college ready standards developed over many years, and has been a thoughtful and deliberate process. The lack of other states that directly compare should not deter Washington's commitment to follow-through on an aligned system with the goal of career and college readiness for all students.

### **5) Overview of Spring 2015 Smarter Balanced Testing Results and Impact on Establishing Minimum Graduation Scores**

As discussed in Section 2 of this memo, both 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 11<sup>th</sup> graders took the Smarter Balanced ELA assessment in spring 2015. Figure 3 shows the Smarter Balanced ELA results for all students, only 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and only 11<sup>th</sup> graders. The performance of the 10<sup>th</sup> graders is far better than for the 11<sup>th</sup> graders, the reverse of what one might expect. In fact, 10<sup>th</sup> graders performed far better than projected, based on field test results. Over 70 percent of 10<sup>th</sup> graders earned a career and college ready Level 3 or Level 4.

Figure 4 shows the results by achievement level. At the lower achievement level, the percentage of 11<sup>th</sup> graders exceed the percentage of 10<sup>th</sup> graders. At the higher levels, the relationship is reversed.

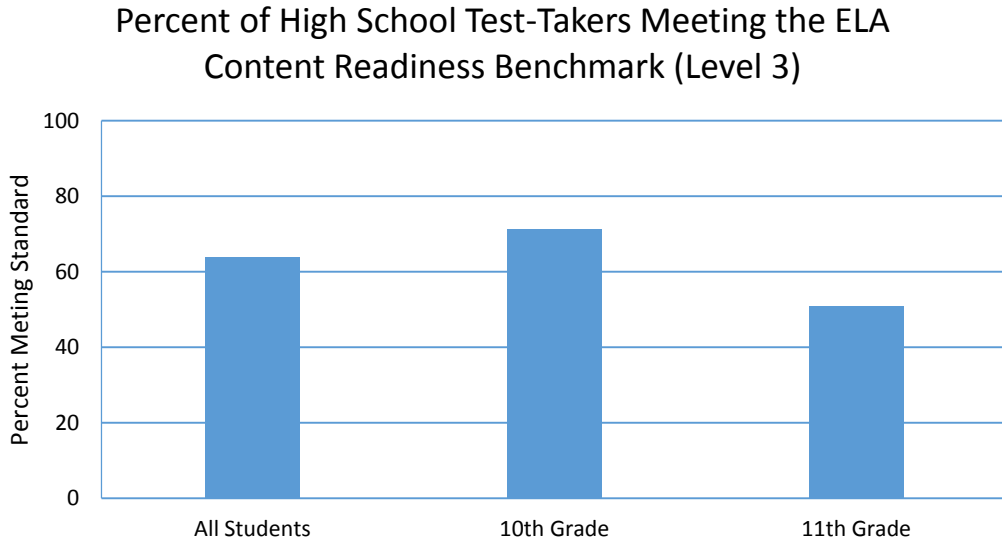
Figure 5 shows the results of the Smarter Balanced math test, which was taken by 11<sup>th</sup> graders only. The percentage at a Level 3 or above is quite low—less than 30 percent. This is much lower than the results for this cohort of students on the math COEs would suggest should be expected.

---

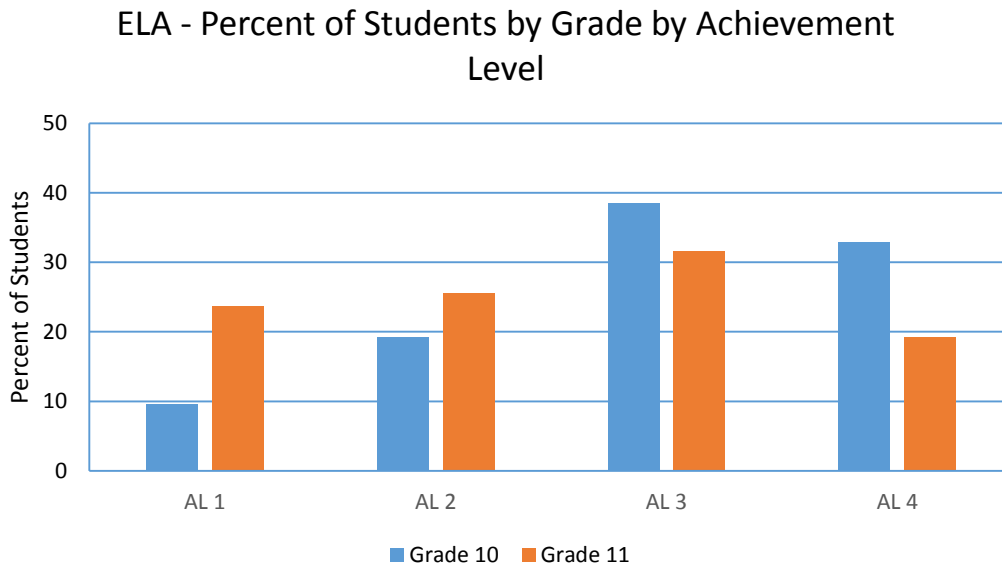
<sup>1</sup> Information in this section is primarily from Achieve, <http://www.achieve.org/ClosingtheExpectationsGap2014>, and personal communication with Dr. Jacob Mishook.

Table 3 shows the number of students who participated in each test by grade and subject. Note the low participation by 11<sup>th</sup> graders. This is may be due to the high refusal rate by 11<sup>th</sup> graders.

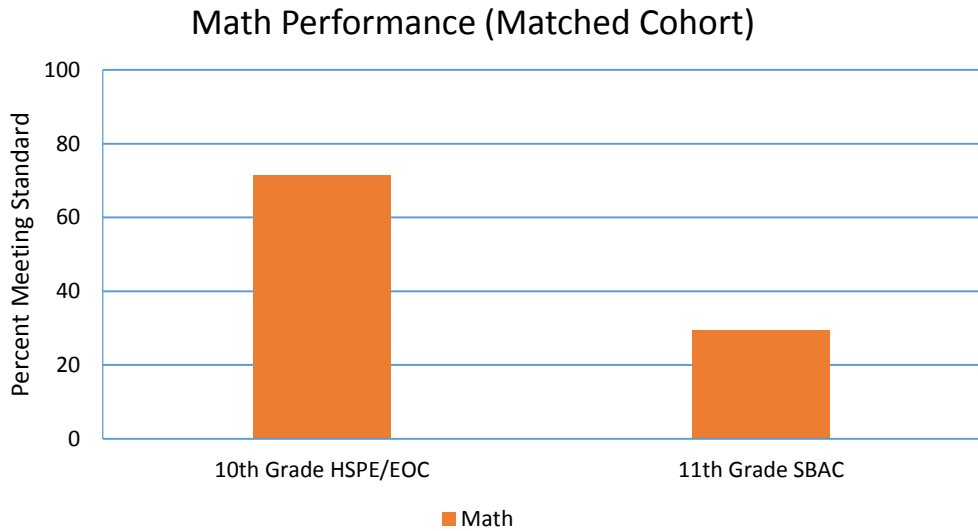
**Figure 3:** Spring 2015 Results for Smarter Balanced ELA



**Figure 4:** Spring 2015 Smarter Balanced ELA Results by Achievement Level



**Figure 5:** Performance of 11<sup>th</sup> Graders on the Smarter Balanced Math Compared to The Performance of the Same Students on the Math EOCs.



**Table 3:** Approximate number of Students Participating in Spring 2015 High School Testing

Grade Level and Subject of SBA	Number of Students	Number of Students Who Took HSPE or EOC Previous Yr.
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade ELA SBA	~65,000	~73,000
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade ELA SBA	~38,000	~73,000
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math SBA	~35,000	~72,000

For 11<sup>th</sup> grade students, both low participation and unusually low performance renders the data from the 11<sup>th</sup> grade Smarter Balanced test results less desirable for use in setting minimum graduation scores.

Fortunately, because of the use of the Smarter Balanced ELA assessment as a transition test for 10<sup>th</sup> graders, data exists from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade results that could be used for setting a minimum graduation score. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the Smarter Balanced math assessment, and the Board will need to consider how to set a minimum graduation score on the math assessment. Possible options include setting the minimum graduation score as:

- SBAC Achievement Level 2.
- SBAC Achievement Level 3.
- A level commensurate with the Smarter Balanced ELA minimum graduation score.

Several options will be presented to the Board at the August special meeting.



## 6) Action

At the August Special Meeting the Board will consider establishing graduation scores on new high school assessments aligned to new learning standards in English Language Arts and math. For the transition math EOCs, it is anticipated that OSPI will follow the method approved by the Board for determining minimum graduation scores. OSPI will also present proposed scores for WA-AIM.

Determining the minimum graduation scores for the Smarter Balanced exams will be somewhat more complex because of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade results. For ELA, the 10<sup>th</sup> grade results could be used, and a method similar to the method OSPI will follow for the EOCs may yield a reasonable minimum graduation score that would fulfill the goal of “equal impact.”

For setting the minimum math graduation score, a similar solution is not available because only 11<sup>th</sup> graders took the Smarter Balanced math assessments. Because of the low participation and low achievement, setting a score according to the originally proposed “matched cohort” approach (see Appendix D), would yield a very low minimum graduation score that most likely would not meet the target of “equal impact.” At the Board meeting, OSPI will present several options and SBE staff will make a recommendation for setting the minimum graduation score on the Smarter Balanced math assessments.

The Smarter Balanced math assessment may be used as an alternative for the Classes of 2016, 2017, and 2018, but it will not be until spring 2018 that 11<sup>th</sup> graders in the Class of 2019 will take the assessment for graduation purposes. The minimum graduation score that the Board must set on the Smarter Balanced math assessment by the end of the school year, as directed by statute, may be revisited once more reliable data is available.

If you have questions regarding this memo, please contact Linda Drake at [linda.drake@k12.wa.us](mailto:linda.drake@k12.wa.us).