

Cindy,

Thank you so much for asking us for feedback regarding the appropriate cut score for 10th grade students on the ELA Smarter Balanced Assessment. In reviewing our data at Medical Lake here is what we know.

Our HSPE results have averaged around 92% proficient when combining the Reading and Writing results. Current data shows that approximately 80% of our 10th grade students met the level 3 proficiency rating for the Smarter Balanced ELA.

If the cut score for 10th grade students was at a level 2 we would have approximately 93% of our 10th grade students meeting that expectation. If the cut score was set at 2553 (approximately 30 points below the level 3 cut score) we would have approximately 86% of students meeting the requirement (I used this score because it appears that most students' individual deviation was 30 points).

I hope this helps. It at least gives you some information for where we are at in Medical Lake. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Thank you,

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Kimberly Headrick  
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Medical Lake School District  
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Dear SBE Director McMullen (Cindy):

I received your e-mail request via Dr. Dunn regarding SBAC cut scores. I have passed it along to our assessment administrator, assistant superintendent, Dr. Bob Maxwell. I hope he is able to comment since he has more direct involvement with the testing process, results, and impacts on students. However, I will comment more from a conceptual perspective and my own experiences as parent and educator.

College and career ready implies such a wide range of proficiencies. From personal experience with own children, students heading into an entry level job or an entry level career such as trade apprentice program, will require much different kinds and levels of proficiency than someone entering any 4-year-plus institution (which these alone vary widely in proficiency needs and requirements), and then there is everything in between.

To be fair, the score for graduation should be at a level that really anyone who is ready to be employed (begin any career) should be able to pass. High school graduation should not be limited to those heading toward a baccalaureate degree. Tiers of recognition (3 and 4), that could mean something to a community college or university in making acceptance and placement decisions, should be an incentive and would be appropriate, but not as graduation requirements.

In my view, SBE is trying to do too many things with a single test score whether ranking student or ranking schools and districts. Making graduation dependent upon a single test is not appropriate. It is one of many important indicators that should be considered for graduation from high school and in differentiating the meaning of college and career readiness. A single test should not be used to discourage and stunt student development, instead a test should inform and motivate.

Thank you for all your work on behalf of the education of children, Cindy.

Warm Regards,  
Paul

Cc: Dr. Michael Dunn, NEWESD Superintendent  
Dr. Bob Maxwell, Asst. Supt., Pullman Public Schools

Cindy: I am responding to the e-mail you sent to Dr. Dunn requesting superintendent feedback on SBAC cut scores. Thank you for seeking input. Unfortunately, I cannot give you good feedback on this issues because I can't determine the reliability of the data obtained through the testing. I have spent a good deal of time evaluating our test scores as they relate to other assessments such as MAPS. I am seeing very little correlation of scores across the middle ranges and upper ranges.

Our students who score poorly on MAPS score poorly on SBAC. Our students who score at their expected level on MAPS are generally not scoring as well on SBAC. Admittedly our sample sizes are very small and other factors could be contributing to the discrepancies but our teachers and administrators are convinced the discrepancies are a result of the test format. Our kids are not used to this test format and are not willing to invest the time it takes to answer a question.

My plea would be that you consider developing an alternative path for students to demonstrate mastery—please not a the COE---that can be used in the interim as student learn how to take this new assessment. Again, thank you for your inquiry. John

John Glenewinkel  
Superintendent Curlew and Republic School Districts.

Good morning Cindy,

I am responding to your request for feedback regarding the cut scores for the SBAC.

I very much appreciate the process the board intends to use to set the cut scores on the SBAC prior to 2019. One of the biggest concerns I have with this whole CCSS/SBAC package is that cut scores would be set in such a way that 50-60% of test-takers would fail meeting the standards, thereby giving those students the message that they are failing at school. (One wonders how many would drop out at that point.) Regardless, the opt out movement of today will continue to grow even with your appropriate decision to tie cut scores to previous test cut scores.

And Cindy, *I hasten to add* that in 2019, which will be here before we know it, the cut scores that supposedly, and in an accurate way, reflect "college and career readiness", may continue to need mitigating to give the system more time to get up to speed. It isn't magic that somehow brings about such radical changes to a system as large as our public schools, but rather, honest work, over time and with an openness to mid-course corrections along the way. And by the way, *who exactly* determines the CCR level that would be utilized in 2019? We all know that testing and educational supply companies, who will be making a fortune on all this, want for there to be widespread failures on the test so that testing repeats and supplemental, tutoring supplies will be need and that the "crisis" of our "failing schools" will continue to be on the front burner so that they can continue their profitable endeavor. If they're in on this decision (and they're offering to help states set the CCR cut scores at present) , it would be a conflict of interest big enough to drive a tank through. No that that will stop them.

I know everybody is in a great big hurry to have this whole concern, which has been virtually thrust upon us from above (top-down), working as smooth as syrup. There are a couple of obstructions to this syrupy outcome however, the biggest being that it is entirely a top-down movement and doesn't have the public's or educators' support. In addition, virtually every teacher I know of is afraid of how the test scores might be used against them in the future as they have been under NCLB and RTTT. And despite what your ED believes, using test scores to judge schools and teachers lacks the validity and reliability that the public and education professionals deserve from such an appraisal. Also, when the public figures out that the standards are owned by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers and that any changes to the standards will have to proceed through these two political organizations, they're going to want to know why the standards aren't in the public domain where the public actually has the opportunity to change or delete standards that don't seem appropriate to them. Well, everybody needs to slow down, take a deep breath, and remember who we're serving here: one would hope that this is our students and their parents and not the testing "experts" and politicians. Even the educators who have worked on the standards have often been current employees of the chief school officers and not current classroom teachers, (the ones who are being forced to implement the standards and the assessments in their classrooms). One would be foolish to expect neutral, honest advice from educators that are under the control of their bosses, the chief state education officers (the co-owners of the CCSS and SBAC). It's just one conflict of interest after another with the CCSS and SBAC.

Finally, Cindy, I would strongly urge you to read "The Common Core Dilemma. Who Owns Our Schools" by Mercedes Schneider. Her's is a very well researched book with all of her claims referenced. As she points out, this entire Common Core colossus has been thrust upon us by a very small number of people and has been ramrodded through in such a way that no time or effort has been afforded for public and practicing educator input. While I understand that a full, open-ended discussion of the standards with group consensus as the objective would take a long time, without the true owners of our public schools, the public, buying in, these standards will continue to be divisive. And until we have *much more* in the way of classroom teacher buy-in,

along with assurances that the resulting test scores won't be used to continue the delegitimization of the teaching profession and the closure and privatization of neighborhood schools, there will be activists like myself and many others who will struggle to figure out a way to derail this onrushing, and many would say out of control, freight train that's been unleashed on us without our permission.

Please give my thanks to the SBOE for its decision to tie the current cut scores to previous test score results, thereby mitigating the exceedingly negative responses that would surely result if you would have skipped this step and gone straight to CCR cut scores (as arbitrary as they are). Please share this message with the State Board and staff. Perhaps the board could read Schneider's book as homework prior to continuing on in their decision-making.

Sincerely,

Andy James, Legislative Representative  
Onion Creek School Board

Ms. McMullen,

I would recommend using a SBAC cut score of 2500 for the class of 2016, 17, and 18. I compared current HSPE data with SBAC data. A cut score of 2500 would allow 90% of our students who passed HSPE RDG to have earned a passing mark. In math it would be just under 70%. I have attached the spreadsheet, hope this helps.

Pat Gaffney  
Vice Principal/Athletic Director  
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## To Whom IT May Concern

I would like to share a comment or two about the placement of “cut scores” in relation to the Smarter Balance Assessment for graduation from high school. The public here in Okanogan County is quickly losing respect for the whole testing process. They do not understand how one test is suppose to decide if a student has learned enough to graduate from high school. When the federal government failed to correct the NCLB scores and results thereof, most schools in Washington were classified as “Failing”. Consequently, there was a quiet revolt in Okanogan County – parents quit asking for building or district test scores, newspapers quit publishing results, board members directed administrators not to show or even discuss the results of the scores. Consequently, NCLB has been dropped from most of the educators’, parents’ and community’ vocabularies. I am deeply concerned, if the SBE sets the cut scores so high that many students cannot reach them, then the power, influence and use of those scores will go the way of NCLB.

This week’s front page story of the Washington Post states the number of colleges and universities no longer require the SAT or ACT to register at their schools - George Washington University being the last major college to do so. The colleges are stating the biggest determining factor for success in college is a student’s high school GPA, not one or two tests. It always makes educators scratch their heads and wonder how a student from Okanogan High School can receive a 4.00 through high school and be admitted to Harvard University yet come from a school that has been deemed “Failing” by the government. Again, the “cut” scores need to be set high enough to have meaning, but not so high as to lack meaning to the public. If you are going to error, error on the side of the student and set the “cut” scores accordingly.

Richard  
Dr. Richard Johnson, Superintendent  
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**Carpe Diem!** (Horace (65BC-8BC))

I would hope the SBE would weight their decision on this matter carefully because of the impact it could have on the lives of our students, districts, and communities. This is the first year of a very rigorous new state assessment. Teachers and students have worked hard to learn new standards and requirements. The assessment is an all online assessment and this has required many adjustments especially for a small rural district. I would hope for a fair and equitable decision on this matter.

Thank you,

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White Salmon Valley Schools  
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To: Chair Munoz-Colon and Members of the State Board of Education  
From: Wendy Rader-Konofalski, WEA  
Re.: Testimony for August 5<sup>th</sup> special meeting on SBAC cut scores  
Date: July 30, 2015

Please accept this letter as testimony on the issue of cut scores for high school tests required for graduation which you are poised to act upon at your August 5<sup>th</sup> special meeting. I regret that I will not be able to present this testimony in person.

WEA believes in high standards, accountability, and assuring that all students are provided a quality education that prepares them for life, work, and career through whatever means possible including post-secondary education, apprenticeships, on the job training, technical certificates, community or technical colleges, etc. But where we differ from other groups who are pressuring the board to hold the course on high stakes testing and denying kids their high school diplomas if they do not attain the SBAC score, is that we think the real measure of success is not shown through summative testing, retesting, alternative testing, but in successful coursework, formative classroom assessments focusing on growth, the ability to work in teams, do well on class projects, and other skills that are best reflected through successful course completion.

So long as we are using tests as high stakes graduation requirements, we support cut scores that are fair to students. We know that SBAC tests were never designed for use as a graduation requirement. SBAC spokespeople made that clear early on in the process. It is only because we are using the tests for graduation requirements that discussion of a second lower cut score is relevant. If we did not use the SBAC tests to deny graduation or stigmatize students as failures but to provide students and schools needed information for further advanced or remedial work, or to signal system course correction, we would not need to establish a lower cut score.

The reality is that currently the SBAC high school tests (10<sup>th</sup> and/or 11<sup>th</sup>) are being used and, absent legislative action, will continue to be used as a high stakes graduation requirement. Yet these tests, ELA and math and even math end of course tests, are brand new, and many students will not have even been given the chance to learn all the material or been fully acquainted with the new expectations, or have computers at home to be proficient on a keyboard. Various levels of readiness exist across the state from district to district.

If we do not want to doom larger percentages of our students than ever to failure (many of whom will be students who make up the growing achievement gap) by denial of a high school diploma which they might otherwise be qualified for, then a lower cut score based on the criteria that OSPI has recommended appears to be the only way we can avoid massive, unfair, and unjustifiable damage. Perhaps if we had a fully funded K-12 system, lower class sizes in all grades, years of focused and equitable alignment of new standards in every school across the state, equal access to technology, plentiful resources including professional development for all teachers to be equitably prepared, wraparound services for all students in poverty or from troubled homes, maybe then we could look our kids' in the eyes and say the system had given them a fair and equitable chance to pass these tests at the highest cut score possible. But that is far from the reality.

Having a lower cut score is needed under the current circumstances, but doesn't absolve the SBE of its policy role around the larger issue of the most appropriate and effective use of test scores. Using them to grant or deny graduation diplomas will continue to be in direct competition with the time and effort necessary for students to successfully achieve the 24 credits which the Board has prioritized as the main focus for high school graduation

In a recent article printed in the Seattle Times it was reported that:

*The Tacoma university (UPS) has joined a small number of Washington colleges (including WSU), and a growing list of colleges nationally, that don't require undergraduate applicants to submit standardized test scores when submitting an application for admission. The reason? UPS has found that grade-point averages are much more predictive of how a student will do in college than a score on a test. \**

We know that over 800 accredited colleges and universities prioritize GPA and college level credits in their admissions' decisions.\*\*

If it is our goal is to make our students "college and career ready," we cannot ignore what our colleges and universities are saying. Doing well in challenging courses, working hard and getting good grades –those are the keys to post-secondary success. A policy that makes test scores pre-eminent in decisions for graduation simply sets our students and our state up for failure by raising the bar on the number and quality of credits when attaining that high bar can be trumped by one test score. This policy means that students most desired by colleges and universities might never even get to the front door of their future.

We urge the State Board of Education to take this immediate and urgent step to adopt a graduation cut score to the high stakes SBAC test, but to move quickly to join with all the other states that do not use standardized tests for graduation-- either by supporting a policy such as the one in HB 2214 or a simpler delink bill which will allow our system to fully focus on the much higher bar set by the Board's signature 24 credit framework.

Thank you for your time and efforts on behalf of public education in our state,

Wendy Rader-Konofalski  
WEA Lobbyist

\*See the article linked below:

<http://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/tacoma-university-banishes-the-sat/>

\*\*The list of colleges and universities that do not require standardized tests for admissions  
<http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional>

Dear SBE Members and SBE Executive Director, Ben Rarick -

I urge the State Board of Education to sustain your previous position of establishing initial cut scores on the Smarter Balanced Assessments to conform with recent similar rates of meeting standard on the MSP and HSPE. This is a fair and measured position to take as teachers and students become more comfortable and familiar with the increased rigor and content changes represented by the Common Core State Standards and the accompanying new assessments.

Truly,

Larry Francois, Superintendent

Northshore School District

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"Strengthening Our Community Through Excellence in Education"

Members of the Washington State Board of Education:

Tomorrow, the board will consider the adoption of scores used to identify students earning the *Certificate of Academic Achievement* based on the *Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA)*. As the cut score is established it is important to maintain the state's expectation for student performance during this transition year to the new standards and assessment. As a result, a cut score within the level 2 range should be established for the 2015 SBA. Aligning the SBA to graduation requirements is valuable but the state cut score needs to be achievable for students at the same or similar rate in 2015 as it was in 2014.

Both our students and teachers are working diligently to adapt to the new standards. The number of students demonstrating an understanding of the Common Core State Standards as assessed on the SBA will increase in future years as those students have been provided instruction aligned to the CCSS for an extended number of years. The students assessed on the SBA in 2015 have been provided instruction aligned to the CCSS but during a time period when teachers were mastering the new CCSS standards, working to change instruction to align to the standards and in many cases adopting new curriculum aligned to the CCSS. Change takes time. As a result, the cut scores should also under go change - they should change by increasing over time beginning with a cut score within the level 2 range for 2015 and resulting in a level 3 graduation requirement in 2018.

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