



# THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

**Title:** Review of Smarter Balanced Implementation

- As Related To:**
- Goal One: Develop and support policies to close the achievement and opportunity gaps.
  - Goal Two: Develop comprehensive accountability, recognition, and supports for students, schools, and districts.
  - Goal Three: Ensure that every student has the opportunity to meet career and college ready standards.
  - Goal Four: Provide effective oversight of the K-12 system.
  - Other

- Relevant To Board Roles:**
- Policy Leadership
  - System Oversight
  - Advocacy
  - Communication
  - Convening and Facilitating

**Policy Considerations / Key Questions:**

The State Board of Education (SBE) will hear from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and representatives from districts on the implementation of new state assessments. Key questions may include:

- How should the accountability system be modified during the transition to new assessments, to ensure fairness to students, educators, schools and districts?
- Do implementation issues of new assessments impact the Board’s role in setting the score on high school assessments that students must meet to graduate?

- Possible Board Action:**
- Review
  - Approve
  - Adopt
  - Other

- Materials Included in Packet:**
- Memo
  - Graphs / Graphics
  - Third-Party Materials
  - PowerPoint

**Synopsis:**

The Board will hear from a panel of representatives from OSPI and several districts about implementation on the new state assessments, the Smarter Balanced assessments in English language arts and math. The agency and the districts have been asked to share things that went well, and challenges that were encountered with administration of the new assessment. Panelists were asked about the state’s or their district’s experience with student refusals, technology, score reporting, field testing, and other topics associated with the new state tests.

No Board action is directly associated with this agenda item, but information from this discussion may inform Board consideration of approval of a policy statement concerning the transition to new assessments, and may inform approval of a graduation cut-score on new high school assessemnts planned for August 2015.



## REVIEW OF SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION

### Policy Considerations

Spring 2015 was the first full administration of the Smarter Balanced assessment aligned to new learning standards in English language arts and math. At the July 2015 meeting, the State Board of Education (SBE) will hear from a panel of state and district educators concerning the implementation of the Smarter Balanced assessment.

Key questions may include:

- Changes in Washington's assessment system profoundly impact the state's accountability system, which in turn affects districts, schools, educators and students. How should the accountability system be modified during the transition to new assessments?
- Do implementation issues of new assessments impact the Board's role in setting the score on high school assessments that students must meet to graduate?

### Background

#### *Role of the SBE in the Assessment System*

State law directs the SBE to provide consultation to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) in the development and maintenance of the assessment system:

In consultation with the state board of education, the superintendent of public instruction shall maintain and continue to develop and revise a statewide academic assessment system in the content areas of reading, writing, mathematics, and science for use in the elementary, middle, and high school years designed to determine if each student has mastered the essential academic learning requirements identified in subsection (1) of this section. (RCW 28A.305.130(3)(a)).

The SBE also sets the scores needed to show proficiency on state assessments and approved alternative assessments (RCW 28A.305.130), and the scores for high school graduation exit exams.

Legislation passed in 2013 (EHB 1450) established that the high school Smarter Balanced assessment for English language arts and math would have separate scores for high school graduation, set by the SBE, and for indicating career and college readiness, set by the Smarter Balanced Consortium. The legislature directed the SBE to:

By the end of the 2014-15 school year, establish the scores students must achieve to meet the standard and earn a certificate of academic achievement on the high school English language arts assessment and the comprehensive mathematics assessment developed with a multistate consortium in accordance with RCW [28A.655.070](#). To determine the appropriate score, the state board shall 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, and review the scores in other states that require passage of an eleventh grade assessment as a high school graduation requirement. The scores established by the state board of education for the purposes of earning a certificate of academic achievement and graduation from high school may be different from the scores used for the purpose of determining a student's career and college readiness. (RCW 28A.305.130).

The SBE is scheduled to approve the graduation cut-scores at a special meeting of the Board on August 5, 2015. The panel discussion at the July 2015 meeting is part of the statutory requirement to review the transition experience of Washington students to the new assessments.

Several bills introduced in the 2015 session would modify the assessment system and the Board's role in the assessment system. However, as of the date of this meeting packet, none of these bills have been passed into law.

For further information on the role of the SBE in the assessment system, as well as a discussion of the anticipated impact of the new assessments on districts, see the memo prepared for the September 2014 meeting: <http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/Sept/04Assessments1.pdfAction>

### *Panel Discussion Topics*

Some concerns with tests aligned to the Common Core State Standards have been covered by the press in Washington and around the country. Panelists have been asked to share their knowledge and their districts' experience around these topics at the July meeting, as well as share about the districts' particular successes and challenges with testing this spring. Some concerns include:

1. Refusal by students to participate in state testing

As the testing window in Washington just closed, data on the number and characteristics of students who did not participate in state testing ('opted-out') is not yet known as of the time of this memo. Some districts have indicated that participation was higher in the lower grades, and lower in high school. Eleventh graders who had already met their assessment graduation requirement through end-of-course exams and the Washington High School Proficiency Exams (HSPE) may have been less motivated to take the Smarter Balanced assessment. If this is true, it suggests that participation by high school students should increase next year, when most students will use the Smarter Balanced exam as their graduation assessment requirement.

Information such as the percentage, the demographics, and the probable performance level of students who did not participate in state testing has a critical impact on how testing data can be used and interpreted. If students who did not participate would have been predominately lower performing, or conversely, if they would have tended to perform better on the test, school-level performance data and achievement gap data could be skewed. Washington Achievement Index results could be affected. A study of data from Pennsylvania found that for schools near the threshold of "acceptable" in the state's school rating system, as few as a dozen high-achieving students opting out could lower the school score below the threshold.<sup>1</sup>

Test result data used for setting the graduation cut-score on the Smarter Balanced assessment could also be impacted by a lowered participation rate. The data will need to be examined to ensure it is demographically representative of the Washington student population and of a large enough sample-size to provide a reliable cut-score. The process for setting the graduation threshold approved by the Board at the March 2015 Board meeting may need to be modified if the available data is impacted by low student participation.

Recent studies in other states provide varied information about the population of students who are refusing to participate, suggesting that there may be local variability in why students are not participating and who the students are. For example, a study of 648 districts in New York found that districts serving more free- and reduced-lunch student had a lower opt-out rate<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, a study of 310 of districts in Ohio found 14.5% of districts had no opt-outs, and 77% had fewer than 1%. Of the Ohio districts that had a

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<sup>1</sup> Beaver, J., and Westmaas, L. (2015, June 9). When Students Opt Out, What are the Policy Implications? Retrieved June 20, 2015 from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/06/10/when-students-opt-out-what-are-the.html>

<sup>2</sup> Chingos, M. (2015, June 18). Who Opts Out of State Tests? Retrieved June 20, 2015, from <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/06/18-chalkboard-who-opts-out-chingos?rssid=education>

significant number of opt-out students there did not appear to be a correlation with the average income in the district.<sup>3</sup>

A participation in state testing of 95% is a criteria for some federal funding, so schools with a significant portion of students who do not participate may have their funding affected.

## 2. Technology challenges

The Smarter Balanced assessment was designed to be a computer adaptive test, although paper tests were available this year. Districts may have experienced technology challenges.

## 3. Scoring challenges

Scores have taken longer to be returned to districts than planned. OSPI staff will discuss this issue, and districts will share the impact this has had.

In 2013 the Legislature mandated a process for districts to use test results for third graders in reading to address students who are below grade level in reading, so third grade reading results were particular important, and many districts tested third graders early to facilitate planning. Legislation passed this session (ESSB 5803) eliminated the requirement to use state testing results received prior to the end of the school year in the process. However, state testing results in third grade reading remain a trigger for statutorily required activities by the district, such as notification of parents if the student is below grade level, and notification of the strategies that are available to address the student's needs.

## 4. Participation in field testing of the Smarter Balanced assessment

Last year some districts in Washington chose to participate in field testing of the Smarter Balanced assessment. The federal Department of Education permitted states to allow elementary and middle schools that participated in field testing not to have to administer the state assessments (for Washington the Measurement of Student Progress (MSP)). Not having state testing data for a year impacts the schools' identification for school improvement and Achievement Index. For schools that field tested, data from the last year of state testing is "carried-forward" in subsequent years until new state testing results are available. At this Board meeting, the Board will discuss the accountability system during the transition to new assessments, including the impact of field testing.

For districts, there were advantages and disadvantages to field testing. Field testing allowed schools to prepare for the full administration of the Smarter Balanced assessment by testing their technology and their assessment processes. On the other hand, field testing deprived schools of an additional year of state testing results that would have been comparable to previous years.

Panelists will discuss their experience of field testing and their districts' and schools' decisions whether to field test.

## Action

No Board action is associated with this agenda item. This panel discussion may help inform SBE consideration of approval of a policy statement concerning the use of the Achievement Index during the transition to new assessments. In addition, this discussion may also inform the action planned for August 2015, when the Board will consider approval of a graduation cut-score for the high school Smarter Balanced assessments.

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

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<sup>3</sup> Evans, M. (2015, June 17). Understanding the Rise of Ohio's Opt Out Movement. Webinar presentation retrieved June 17, from [www.edweek.org/go/webinar](http://www.edweek.org/go/webinar).

**Format for Panel: Review of Districts' Experiences with the Smarter/Balanced Assessment during the 2014-15 School Year**

**Robin Munson, Asst. Superintendent, OSPI – SBAC Roll-Out (15 minutes)**

- What Went According to Plan – Review of 'Wins'
- Technology Challenges
- Score Report Challenges
- IT Challenges
- Student Refusal Challenges (Extent of 'Opt-Out' – Do We Know the Data, and What Impact is it Likely to Have on Standard Setting? What are Federal Participation Requirements?)
- Implications for Policy & Practice in Future
- How Does SBAC Receive User Feedback on Washington's Experience? How Can SBE provide SBAC this Feedback?

**Sarah Rich, Asst. Superintendent, North Thurston School District – (15 minutes)**

- What Went Accordingly to Plan – Review of 'Wins'
- Experience of Non-Field-Test Schools
- Technology or Administrative Challenges Experienced
- Recommendations for the State, and for SBAC Vendor Going Forward

**Eric Anderson – Director, Research, Evaluation & Assessment, Seattle Public Schools – (15 minutes)**

- What Went Accordingly to Plan – Review of 'Wins'
- Technology or Administrative Challenges Experienced
- Recommendations for the State, and for SBAC Vendor Going Forward

**Anne Wolfley, Director of Teaching & Learning, Riverside School District — (15 minutes)**

- What Went Accordingly to Plan – Review of 'Wins'
- Unique Technology or Administrative Challenges Experienced by Rural Districts
- Recommendations for the State, and for SBAC Vendor Going Forward