



219 North Main Street, Suite 402, Barre, VT 05641 | 802-479-1030 | www.education.vermont.gov

Vermont Statewide Assessment Results Released

BARRE – Today, Secretary of Education Rebecca Holcombe announced statewide results for the 2014-15 Smarter Balanced Assessment. This new, computer adaptive test was developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, a partnership of 31 states plus the US Virgin Islands and the Department of Defense Education Activity Office. These tests, which were administered this spring in 18 states, the US Virgin Islands and Department of Defense schools, provide the first test results aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Over time, these tests will provide teachers and parents with a more reliable and accurate snapshot of how their kids are performing in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Vermont’s statewide results:

2015 Smarter Balanced Results	Total “Proficient” and Above	2015 Smarter Balanced Results	Total “Proficient” and Above
Math Grade 3	52%	English Language Arts Grade 3	52%
Math Grade 4	45%	English Language Arts Grade 4	51%
Math Grade 5	42%	English Language Arts Grade 5	57%
Math Grade 6	37%	English Language Arts Grade 6	53%
Math Grade 7	43%	English Language Arts Grade 7	55%
Math Grade 8	40%	English Language Arts Grade 8	54%
Math Grade 11	37%	English Language Arts Grade 11	58%

“These results give us a means to evaluate the size and direction of our achievement gaps, as well as the mastery of individual students on specific content,” said Holcombe. “At the state level, we will look closely at scores to assess challenges related to equity and set goals. At the local level, educators will use individual scores, along with other locally collected data, to assess students’ needs and plan instruction. For parents, the tests can help them ask good questions when they meet with teachers, and provide one benchmark for monitoring their student’s progress and success.”

Since the student test scores released today establish a new baseline aligned with the Common Core, they should not be compared to previous statewide test scores on different tests. As with any

change, there will be a period of adjustment, as teachers and students get used to the new standards and tests.

The new assessment replaces Vermont's previous tests in English language arts and mathematics, known as the NECAP (New England Common Assessment Program). The Smarter Balanced test asks students to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and skills in areas such as critical thinking, analytical writing, and problem solving.

The Smarter Balanced Assessment is a computer adaptive test, administered online. This means the test adjusts the difficulty of the test items based on how a test taker responds. If a student answers incorrectly, he or she gets a slightly easier item. If she answers correctly, she gets a slightly harder item. This means very few children take a test that feels too hard or too easy. It also means the test can provide a more precise measure of what students can and cannot do.

Parents may notice that fewer students scored as proficient on the Smarter Balanced test than did on the NECAP tests. This does not mean our students now know less, nor does it mean that our schools—both public and independent-- are doing worse. It simply means the test is a more challenging test, and the Smarter Balanced Consortium deliberately set a proficiency threshold that it knew most students would not meet.

Vermont's State Board of Education and the Agency of Education continue to meet federal requirements to report school level test results in terms of the percent of students who score proficient or better. However, we find that proficiency scores alone have negative effects in supporting school improvement and recognizing the gains students make each year. For this reason, Vermont is moving to an increased focus on scale scores and identifying reliable methods for calculating growth scores. Both of these endeavors require multiple years of testing and are not currently available.

"I'm very grateful that Vermont was able to qualify for a US Department of Education Accountability Waiver," said State Assessment Director Michael Hock. "It will give us a year to figure out how to use the new test results in ways that are more precise and productive than what we've been able to do in the past."

While no single test can give a complete picture of achievement, annual assessments can provide important information about student progress and areas for improvement, especially when combined with student grades and teacher reports. Parents and teachers can use this information to make sure students get the support they need to succeed.

The Agency has compiled several tools to help the public interpret these results. To see your local results, and for more information: <http://education.vermont.gov/assessment/data#smarter-balanced-results>.

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