

Opting Out of State Testing: Frequently Asked Questions

School District Name
Office of the Superintendent
2014–15

What state tests are required for Oregon students?

Assessment	Who	When
Math	All students	Grades 3–8 and at least once in high school
English Language Arts	All students	Grades 3–8 and at least once in high school
Science	All students	Grades 5, 8 and at least once in high school
Social Studies (optional for schools)	All students at schools that choose to participate	Grades 5, 8 and at least once in high school
Extended Assessment	Certain students with disabilities whose IEP teams have determined they should not participate in the standard assessment	Grades 3–8 and at least once in high school
Kindergarten Assessment	All students	Entering kindergarten
English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA)	Students learning English language	Grades K–12
Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) or ACT PLAN	All students	One time in high school

Do students take other nationwide standardized tests in School District Name?

It depends on a student's grade level and course selection. Students may take other tests such as the following:

- Most high school students choose to take nationally recognized college admissions tests such as the SAT or ACT.
- High school students who do not meet the graduation requirement of demonstrating proficiency in reading, writing and math by meeting standards on the statewide assessment may take an alternative assessment.
- High school students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses typically take final, nationwide standardized tests in the applicable AP or IB subject.
- Some high school students complete ACT WorkKeys, an assessment system that measures real-world job skills. Students who successfully complete certain WorkKeys assessments can earn the National Career Readiness Certificate.
- In grade 10, students complete the ACT PLAN assessment. PLAN is a test of English, math, reading and science abilities. It includes a component about the student's future education plans.
- In grade 8, students complete the ACT EXPLORE assessment. EXPLORE is a test of English, math, reading and science abilities. It includes a career exploration component that stimulates students' thinking about high school coursework, career options and other plans for their future.

What accommodations or supports are available to meet my student's needs?

A large part of the state assessment of language arts and math is computer adaptive testing. This means that it's not a one-size-fits-all test. The computer program adjusts the difficulty of questions throughout the test based on your student's responses. For example, a student who answers a question correctly will next be asked a more challenging question, while a student who answers a question incorrectly will next get an easier question. By adapting to your student as the test is taking place, this assessment can present questions targeted to your student's knowledge and ability level, making it less stressful for students who struggle to answer some questions.

For students with particular needs, the Smarter Balanced assessment includes opportunities for universal tools, designated supports and specific accommodations. For every student with an individualized education program, the individual accommodations and supports are identified and listed as part of the annual IEP process. If you have already had an IEP meeting and you feel that accommodations and supports for state testing were not fully addressed, please contact your case manager.

Will the Common Core State Standards require more standardized tests?

No. This change doesn't mean students will take more state tests, but it does mean the tests will be different.

Oregon has adopted the Common Core State Standards, replacing our previous state standards in math and language arts. Since the state's learning standards in math and language arts have changed, the statewide assessment of students' learning in these areas also has changed.

Students will take the new state test for math and the new state test for English language arts (instead of separate assessments of reading and writing) no more than once in a given year. Previously many students took the state test multiple times.

How can I learn more about what has changed in the state tests in math and language arts?

Beginning in spring 2015, Oregon's old assessments in math, reading and writing will be replaced by new assessments in math and language arts that have been developed by the Smarter Balanced Consortium.

This new generation of tests is adaptive to each student's ability level. The assessments aren't one-size-fits-all multiple-choice tests. The new Smarter Balanced tests also are expected to provide more detailed and useful information about your student's learning and progress toward being ready for college and career than the old OAKS tests did.

You can find more information about the Smarter Balanced assessments at www.ode.state.or.us/go/smarterbalanced or [District CCSS/SBAC Webpage or Other Link](#).

Can I opt my student out of the Common Core State Standards?

No. A parent cannot opt out their student from instruction based on the Common Core State Standards in an Oregon public school because these instructional standards form the framework of math and language arts instruction in public schools statewide. State standards are adopted by the State Board of Education and are mandatory for all public schools and charter schools in Oregon. A parent objecting to these learning standards may consider alternative options, such as homeschooling or enrolling in a private tuition-based school that does not align instruction to the state standards.

Can I opt my student out of state tests?

Disabilities and **religious beliefs** are the only bases on which an Oregon school district may approve an exemption. You may request an exemption from state testing to accommodate your student's IDEA or Section 504 identified disability or sincerely held religious beliefs.

Schools are required by law to administer statewide assessments to assess students' learning, in accordance with the procedures and schedule defined by the Oregon Department of Education. Oregon school districts are permitted to excuse a student from a state required program, such as state testing, to accommodate the student's disabilities or religious beliefs.

The applicable rule, OAR 581-022-1910, provides:

(1) The school district may excuse students from a state required program or learning activity, where necessary, to accommodate students' disabilities or religious beliefs:

(a) Approval of the exemption shall be based upon and shall include:

(A) A written request from the student's parent or guardian or the student, if the student is 18 years of age or older or a legally emancipated minor, listing the reasons for the request and a proposed alternative for an individualized learning activity which substitutes for the period of time exempt from the program and meets the goals of the learning activity or course being exempt;

(B) An evaluation of the request and approval by appropriate school personnel (the alternative should be consistent with the student's educational progress and career goals as described in OARs 581-022-1670 and 581-022-1510).

Are there ways for me to share my comments/concerns about state tests other than opting out?

Public schools are required by state and federal law to assess students' learning. To share your comments or concerns about testing requirements with decision-makers, you can write a letter to or speak with:

- Oregon's Superintendent of Public Instruction (Oregon's governor), oregon.gov/gov
- Oregon's Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, www.ode.state.or.us
- Oregon Department of Education or State Board of Education, www.ode.state.or.us
- Oregon's Education Investment Board or Oregon's Chief State School Officer, education.oregon.gov
- Your representatives to the Oregon Legislature, www.oregonlegislature.gov
- Your representatives to the U.S. Congress, house.gov/representatives/find & senate.gov/senators
- U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov

If you have a question or comment specifically about how state tests are administered in **School District Name**, talk to your principal or contact **Individual or Department Name and Contact Information**.

Will a student be sanctioned for not taking state tests?

Students for whom there is an approved exemption will be excused. Students who miss school during state testing, but do not have an approved exemption and whose absence is not otherwise excused as provided by district policy, will have an unexcused absence reflected on their student record.

High school students who do not participate in the state testing (with or without an approved exemption) will need to participate in an alternative assessment to demonstrate proficiency in Essential Skills requirements in reading, writing and math to graduate with an Oregon Diploma.

What are the consequences if I opt my student out of state tests?

- **Information:** Valuable information about your student's K–12 learning progress will be lost. Assessment is an important part of teaching and learning. State tests provide parents and educators with meaningful diagnostic information about a student's progress in mastering certain content and skills. The redesigned state tests in math and language arts (beginning in 2015) are expected to provide even more useful information. A significant consequence of not taking these tests is the loss of valuable information about your student's progress, and the lost opportunity to shape future instruction accordingly.
- **Preparation:** Statewide assessments provide key information about whether your student is on track for graduation, and where he or she may need more help. Additionally, your student may be disadvantaged if his or her first exposure to standardized tests is in high school.
- **Graduation:** In order to graduate from high school in Oregon, your student must meet standards on the statewide assessment or an alternative assessment. Oregon's graduation requirements include demonstrating proficiency in the essential skills of reading, writing and math. Most students do this by meeting standards on the state test. If they do not take or do not pass the state test, they must demonstrate proficiency either by meeting standards on another approved standardized test, or through work samples, which likely would require taking an additional class in place of another chosen course or elective.
- **College placement:** Some colleges and universities now use students' performance on the Smarter Balanced assessment to determine whether a student is ready to take credit-bearing college courses or must take remedial classes that cost the same as college courses but do not count toward a college degree. Students who go to a college using Smarter Balanced scores for placement purposes may be required to take additional college placement tests if they have not completed the Smarter Balanced assessment.
- **School rating:** If too few students are assessed, your school's rating on the state school report card will be negatively impacted. A school's rating can influence how a school is perceived and how well it attracts and retains student enrollment and neighborhood residents. Under Oregon's school accountability system, schools and districts that have state testing participation rates below the minimum requirement, 94.5% of all students and 94.5% of each subgroup of students, will have their overall school rating lowered by one level (out of five) per each consecutive year participation rates are not met.

How do I request a testing exemption to accommodate my student's religious beliefs?

Students who have sincerely held religious convictions against standardized testing may consider asking their parents to request a religious exemption to state tests. A religious exemption must be founded on a sincerely held religious belief, as opposed to a personal, political, or sociological belief without a religious basis. If approved, the student who receives a religious exemption will be excused from the test. Please note that given the priority of test administration, the school will have limited staff available to supervise and facilitate alternate learning activities for students not participating in testing.

To apply for a religious exemption:

- Complete the exemption request form and submit it to the Superintendent's Office by March 30, 2015, or 2 weeks before the test is administered, whichever is earlier.
- On the form, you will need to affirm that the objection to the test is based on a sincerely held religious belief.
- The superintendent's designee will evaluate your request and determine whether it is approved or not approved. The district will respond to your request in writing within 10 working days. If your request is denied, you may appeal the decision to the superintendent within 10 working days.

How do I request a testing exemption to accommodate my student's disability?

Parents of students who have an IDEA or Section 504 identified disability that interferes with their ability to participate in standardized testing, even with accommodations made for their disability, may consider requesting a disability exemption to state tests. Please note that given the priority of test administration, the school will have limited staff available to supervise and facilitate alternate learning activities for students not participating in testing.

- Complete the exemption request form and submit it to the Superintendent's Office by March 30, 2015, or 2 weeks before the test is administered, whichever is earlier.
- On the form, you will need to explain how your student's disability interferes with his or her ability to participate in state tests and why you believe there are no accommodations that would allow your student to participate.
- The superintendent's designee will evaluate your request and determine whether it is approved or not approved. The district will respond to your request in writing within 10 working days. If your request is denied, you may appeal the decision to the superintendent within 10 working days.

Where can I learn more?

- District Website URL
- www.ode.state.or.us

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Parent Request for Exemption from State Testing • 2014–15 • School District Name

This form is for parents and guardians to use in applying for an exemption to standardized testing requirements. Its purpose is to enable the district to discharge its legal right and responsibility to evaluate an exemption request.

Disabilities and religious beliefs are the only bases on which an Oregon school district may approve an exemption. The disability exemption may be approved for students who have an IDEA identified disability that interferes with their ability to participate in standardized testing, even with accommodations made for their disability. The religious exemption may be approved for students whose sincerely held religious beliefs cause them to be opposed to a state required program, including state testing. Merely wishing to avoid testing, or a parent or student having a political, personal or sociological objection to testing that is not based on a sincerely held religious belief, does not qualify for an exemption.

Complete and sign this form and submit it to the Superintendent's Office by March 30, or 2 weeks before the test is administered, whichever is earlier. The district will respond to your request within 10 working days.

Student Name: _____ School: _____ Grade: _____

Parent Name: _____ Email: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Please initial: _____ I request that my student be exempted from state testing for the 2014–15 school year.

REQUEST BASED ON DISABILITY

- ☐ This request is to accommodate my student's IDEA or Section 504 identified disability.

In the area below, please address each of the following:

- Explain in your own words why you are requesting this exemption.
- Describe how your student's IDEA or Section 504 identified disability interferes with his or her ability to participate in state tests.
- Explain why you believe there are no accommodations that would allow your student to participate.

REQUEST BASED ON RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

- ☐ This request is to accommodate my student's sincerely held religious beliefs.

Please initial each statement:

_____ I understand that the purpose of the regulation's exemption for religious beliefs is to accommodate families in circumstances when sincerely held religious beliefs conflict with a state-required program, including statewide tests. Religion, while broadly interpreted, usually is a comprehensive set of beliefs that concern ultimate and fundamental ideas about life, purpose and death. The term "religious beliefs" means religious, moral or ethical beliefs as to what is right and wrong that are sincerely held with the strength of traditional religious convictions. Merely wishing to avoid testing, or having political or social objections to testing not based on a sincerely held religious belief, do not meet the requirements for the exemption.

_____ My student has sincere religious beliefs against statewide assessments and I request an exemption from statewide tests for my student for the 2014–15 school year.

This exemption request includes the following tests administered in 2014–15 (choose all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Statewide Assessment: Language Arts (<i>grades 3–8, 11</i>) | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>students in grades K–12</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Statewide Assessment: Math (<i>grades 3–8, 11</i>) | <input type="checkbox"/> Extended Assessment (<i>for eligible students with disabilities in grades 3–8, 11</i>) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Statewide Assessment: Science (<i>grades 5, 8, 11</i>) | <input type="checkbox"/> PSAT (National Merit Scholarship qualifying test) or ACT PLAN (<i>high school</i>) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Statewide Assessment: Social Studies (<i>grades 5, 8, 11</i>) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kindergarten Readiness (<i>kindergarten students</i>) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Language Proficiency (ELPA) (<i>for eligible</i> | |

Please initial each statement:

- ____ I have read this form and the Frequently Asked Questions on Opting Out of State Testing.
- ____ I understand the consequences to my student and my school of opting my student out of statewide testing.
- ____ I understand that, if my student is in high school, my student must demonstrate proficiency in the essential skills of reading, writing and math in order to graduate. I understand that students who do not take the statewide assessment in these areas must demonstrate they meet standards through another approved standardized test or through work samples. I understand that this may require taking an additional class.
- ____ I propose that my student be provided with an alternative activity during the testing period. I understand that, given the priority of test administration, the school will have limited staff available to supervise and facilitate alternate learning activities for students not participating in testing. Comments or suggestions:

____ I affirm the truthfulness of the statements in this application.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Submit this completed form to:

Superintendent's Office

District Name

District Address

by March 30, 2015

or 2 weeks before the
test is administered,
whichever is earlier

FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT USE ONLY – DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

Received by superintendent's office: _____ Date received: _____

Staff Initials

☐ **Approved** ☐ Response sent to parent on date: _____

☐ **Denied** ☐ Response sent to school on date: _____

Determining official's signature : _____ Date: _____

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