



Key points about the new North Dakota State Assessment

- The new North Dakota State Assessment asks students to demonstrate and apply their knowledge. It tests a student's ability to think and solve problems. It goes beyond asking students to fill in an oval, and measures more precisely what a student knows and is able to do. It is focused on developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It is superior in preparing students for the world beyond high school and college.
- This new assessment is just one measure of students' knowledge and skills. This test, coupled with a variety of other measurements, will provide parents, teachers and students with a comprehensive picture of how students are performing.
- The new assessment is a more honest report of how prepared our students are to be successful in their next grade, and ultimately how prepared they are for college and career. We see big gaps in achievement rates between our North Dakota State Assessment and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is given to students in the fourth and eighth grades nationwide every two years.
- NAEP is considered the gold standard of assessments. It is often called "The Nation's Report Card." Our new state assessment aligns closely with NAEP and gives a more complete and candid look at student performance.
- Scores on the new assessment should not be compared to past exam results. This is a new baseline for testing. These assessments are coupled with higher academic standards, and were designed to be more challenging.
- We believe results will improve in the future as our stronger math and English learning standards take hold. Other states that were early adopters of the new standards are seeing this.
- The assessment helps to pinpoint subject areas where a student is excelling, and others where the student needs work. Teachers and parents will be able to identify and correct problems early. This assessment helps our teachers to do a better job.
- The new state assessment does **not** demand classroom focus on test preparation for knowledge or content (otherwise known as "teaching to the test.") This is because the test measures the skills and knowledge that we teach all year.

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- These assessments are meant to improve student preparation for what to expect in college. We need to minimize the need for remedial instruction in college, which will save students time and money.
- The new state assessment is given online. It is adaptive, which means each student is given a test that is better suited to their individual skills. If a student is doing well, questions become more difficult. If the student isn't doing well, questions become easier. This allows for more precise measurements of a student's ability.
- Less than 1 percent of the teaching time in the school year is spent on state or federally required assessments.
- Students liked taking the assessment online, instead of using the traditional paper-and-pencil method. An online assessment is more appropriate in a world where many entry-level jobs require candidates to apply online.
- There was publicity last spring about problems in administering the assessment. There were some early glitches, but the problems were fixed and process went smoothly for most North Dakota students after early April. The technical difficulties don't mean there are problems with the test itself.
- More than 98 percent of the 54,000 North Dakota students who were asked to sit for the test participated.
- In North Dakota, the new state assessment does not affect whether a student graduates or gets promoted. It does not affect his or her grades. It does not affect teacher pay or evaluations. In other words, the assessment is not a "high-stakes test." This is appropriate. North Dakota and other states are in a time of transition, when a new baseline of student proficiency is being set. An assessment that is setting a new baseline should not be a "high-stakes" test.
- Having sets of assessment results that can be compared to those of students in other states will provide students, parents and teachers with better information about how our North Dakota students are matching up with their peers across the country. That is the goal of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, of which North Dakota is a member. This is especially important in an age of mobile families, and can give students better preparation for attending the college they choose.
- North Dakota State Superintendent Kirsten Baesler has established a task force that is exploring whether we can improve our assessment practices, and what our options are for doing so.
- State Superintendent Kirsten Baesler supports reducing the number of assessments our students must take. She believes this can be done while also supplying the information that parents, teachers, administrators, legislators and policymakers need.

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- The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium test has pushed other testing companies to improve their own offerings and “raise their game.” This will benefit students, teachers and parents and provide a greater number of high-quality assessment choices in the future.

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