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Baesler Announces North Dakota State Assessment Results

BISMARCK, N.D., Oct. 27, 2015 -- School Superintendent Kirsten Baesler on Tuesday announced the first release to schools of test scores from the new North Dakota State Assessment, which was first administered to students in the spring of 2015.

Based on tests scored to date, about 46 percent of North Dakota students who sat for the exams are proficient in English, Baesler said. About 40 percent are proficient in mathematics.

The assessments give North Dakota students an opportunity to demonstrate what they know and are able to do at their grade level. They are aligned to North Dakota's learning standards in English and mathematics.

Roughly 80 percent of the assessments have been processed so far. Baesler said the statewide averages made public Tuesday are a fair representation of what the results should be when all the tests are scored.

Baesler said the new North Dakota State Assessment provides a more accurate representation of how prepared North Dakota students are for college and careers. She said the scores are in line with North Dakota results from other nationally regarded assessments, including the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP).

The 2013 NEAP results showed 48 percent of the fourth graders and 40 percent of the eighth graders were proficient in math, and 34 percent of fourth and eighth graders were proficient in reading.

North Dakota ACT results also provide some context. North Dakota law requires high school juniors to take the ACT. Forty-two percent of the students in North Dakota's Class of 2015 met the ACT's college readiness benchmark for mathematics.

Baesler said results from the new assessment should not be compared to scores from the state's previous tests in past years. The scores establish a new baseline that future results may be measured against, Baesler said.

"These assessments are coupled with higher academic standards, and were designed to be more challenging. They are focused on developing skills in critical thinking and problem-solving," Baesler said. "Our expectations in content and performance are higher. We believe our results will be even higher in the future as our stronger math and English learning standards are taught."

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“These assessments are meant to improve student preparation for what to expect in college, career or the military,” Baesler continued. “We need to minimize the need for remedial instruction at the post-secondary level, which will save students time and money.”

State law requires the assessments in English and mathematics. They are given annually to students in grades three through eight, and to 11th graders. Most of the assessments were taken online, and those results have been released to schools.

More than 56,000 students took the test. Most have been processed. Test scoring has not been finished for about 3,700 students who used paper and pencil, rather than a computer, to take the exam, and for another 6,600 tests that were taken by computer and not completed. Final statewide results will be available in several weeks.

Of the more than 56,000 students who were required to take the test, 416 refused.

Baesler said the results that were made public Tuesday are representative of what the results will be once all tests have been scored. Students told her they preferred taking the assessment online, rather than using the traditional paper and pencil, she said.

“This is the first year of a new testing system, and scoring did require extra time and attention. That is expected when you’re doing something for the first time,” Baesler said. “We expect next year’s results to be available in the summer of 2016.”

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