

Agreement on the use of the Smarter Balanced 11th grade assessment as an indicator of College and Career Readiness for placement into credit-bearing courses

Draft 4.0-September 2014

Background

In 2010, the Common Core State Standards were adopted in Oregon. In 2013, Smarter Balanced was formally selected as the primary assessment to be used to evaluate a student's mastery of these standards. In 2011, Oregon was one of several states to receive a Core to College grant through a consortium of funders including Lumina and Gates. One of the key goals of the Core to College grant is to look at ways in which the Smarter Balanced assessment can be used for placement into college credit bearing courses for a more seamless transition between K-12 and postsecondary institutions. In October of 2013, a group of educators that include math and English faculty from community colleges and four year and private institutions, Oregon Department of Education assessment specialists, school district representatives, and the director of college and career readiness for the Oregon Education Investment Board, began meeting to discuss the use of the Smarter Balanced assessment as an alternative to current placement policy for high school students. Additionally, the group was charged with creating recommendations for pathways to postsecondary education for students who did not meet college readiness standards on the eleventh grade assessment.

From October 2013 to May 2014, the Smarter Balanced Policy Workgroup met monthly for at least three hours to develop a detailed recommendation. The members engaged with the lead psychometrician for Smarter Balanced and researchers at Education Northwest, and examined relevant state policies, both in Oregon and in other states. This group followed the work of Washington, since they are a few months ahead of Oregon on the adoption timeline. Several other states including Idaho, California, and Colorado have included Smarter Balanced into their placement policies.

One of the challenges of being a state that is looking at early adoption of the Smarter Balanced exam for placement and exemption from developmental education is the lack of availability of validity data on the Smarter Balanced test, as students will be taking the first exam in Spring of 2015. Currently, Smarter Balanced and the Oregon Department of Education have plans in place to conduct validation of the scores students receive. Going forward, there will also be alignment with national scores, which will be familiar to many campuses (SAT, ACT, NAEP). By working on recommendations early on, we can identify further work that needs to be done (development of courses, changes in advising structures, etc.) before students start taking the exam, as well as ensuring that students who do not score at college and career ready are given pathways to success and not penalized for scores on the Smarter Balanced exam.

The recommendations presented in this document will be disseminated to various key stakeholders throughout summer of 2014 for feedback. The group will reconvene for a web conference September 29, 2014 to outline next steps for approval of the recommendations. Members will review the incorporated feedback and create a final recommendation. The final version of the recommendations will be presented to the appropriate groups for adoption by the end of 2014. Students taking the Smarter Balanced assessment in Spring of 2015 will be able to take advantage of this policy during their senior year and entering into postsecondary education in Fall of 2016.

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Helping Students Succeed

The Need for Aligned Placement

In Oregon, placement policies (including cut score levels used for placement) vary greatly across the state and between institutions. Some rely on a single standard placement test, such as those developed by College Board or ACT (Accuplacer or Compass), while others use multiple measures for placement and consider other factors such as GPA and SAT scores, for example. What we know so far is that placement exams in and of themselves may not be the best ways to measure student readiness. Recently, a report on placement found that in one urban community college, 36% of students assigned to developmental education based on their Compass scores could have earned a B or better in college-level English and 24% could have scored a B or better on college level math (Scott-Clayton, 2012). Based on research from Michelle Hodara at Education Northwest, we know that in Oregon, of the students who graduated between 2005 and 2011 and went directly into community colleges from high school, 64% enrolled in developmental math and 47% enrolled in developmental reading/writing (Hodara, forthcoming report currently under review). We also know from the research, both in Oregon and nationally, that placement into developmental education decreases the likelihood of successfully completing a postsecondary education.

The Need for More Rigorous Academic Preparation

Research has continued to confirm what we already know: taking rigorous coursework is vital to success in postsecondary education. One of the benefits in considering potential use of the Smarter Balanced results as a placement alternative is that guidance can be provided to students on course-taking patterns for 12th graders that may include accelerated options, as well as transitional courses that help target areas in need of strengthening; thus, helping more students stay on track for being college ready by the time they graduate.

A recent report by the Center for Public Education at the National School Boards Association (2012) found three major activities that contribute to academic success: high-level mathematics, AP/IB courses, and academic advising (<http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Staffingstudents/High-school-rigor-and-good-advice-Setting-up-students-to-succeed/High-school-rigor-and-good-advice-Setting-up-students-to-succeed-Full-Report.pdf>). The Smarter Balanced placement recommendations address the areas listed in this research, such as proposing a rigorous senior year, including college-level mathematics for those scoring as college ready on the Smarter Balanced assessment. There are also plans under development to provide additional information to high school guidance counselors to emphasize the impact of twelfth grade course-taking on a student's subsequent college or career plan.

In addition, the developmental education study by Hodara found that Oregon high school students who took dual credit math (e.g., college algebra) were 15 percentage points less likely to enroll in

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developmental math and students who took dual credit English (English composition) were 9 percentage points less likely to enroll in developmental reading/writing. Overall, participation in dual credit courses in certain subject areas in Oregon is associated with a decreased likelihood of subsequent enrollment in developmental education at community college.

Recommendations:

These recommendations represent Oregon's commitment to improving student college readiness by supporting the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in the state. The goal is to increase the number of students enrolling directly into college courses without remediation and creating alternatives for students if necessary to use their senior year more effectively in getting ready for college-level work. Note that all of the recommendations provide for use of the Smarter Balanced assessment if the student takes additional coursework in his or her senior year.

Students who meet the college and career readiness standards in 11th grade on the Smarter Balanced assessment should be able to retain their exemption from placement testing for one year after high school graduation provided they take additional math and English courses in twelfth grade. Students who do not enter postsecondary within a year of graduating will still need to follow the placement policy (including taking placement exams) of the institution to which they are applying.

The following recommendations were developed using the ALD's (Achievement Level Descriptors) outlined by the Smarter Balanced Consortium. The ALD's were developed via input from a wide range of educators. A brief description is provided below. For more detailed information about content expectations for these levels, please visit (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/achievement-level-descriptors-and-college-readiness/>).

ALD descriptions:

- Level 4: Student demonstrates thorough understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college content- readiness.
- Level 3: Student demonstrates adequate understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college content- readiness.
- Level 2: Student demonstrates partial understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college content-readiness.
- Level 1: Student demonstrates minimal understanding of ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college content-readiness.

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	Twelfth Grade options based on this level	Postsecondary Placement options based level and twelfth grade course-taking	Additional Comments
For students scoring at level 4 on the 11th grade assessment...	Based on college path, a student is advised to take prerequisite Math or English courses for college programs or for advanced college math credit in twelfth grade.	Students should enroll in courses either at a transfer level or program-specific college level class. *do we need to add something for levels 3 and 4 that they need to enroll in English and Math during first year, like WA?	Note that some students may be looking at a degree that may only have a Math 95 or other requirement.
For students scoring at a level 3 on the 11th grade assessment	A student is advised to take college level Math or English in 12 th grade. Students taking college level courses in high school may be required to earn at least a B in that course in order to go directly into the next course in postsecondary without taking a placement exam.	Students may enroll in either a transfer level or program-specific college level course based on meeting additional grade 12 expectations.	
For students scoring at a level 2 on the 11th grade assessment...	Students need to be given the opportunity to become college-ready through the use of English and/or Math transitional courses or modules that address claims that the student struggled with on Students may be reassessed at the end of twelfth grade using a variety of alternative assessments including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolios • Work-samples • Locally developed assessments • SAT/ACT • Twelfth grade statewide retest as available. 	Students need to take a transitional course to develop skills. If a student does not reach the equivalent of a level 3 after taking a transition course, he or she will need to follow the institution's requirements for placement exams. If a student does meet college and career readiness standards by the end of 12 th grade, he or she then follows the recommendations for level 3 scores.	Many schools have some sort of supplemental/support courses but we will need to see what courses are available and promote/expand (http://www.sreb.org/page/1508/sreb_readiness_courses.html)
For student scoring at a 1 on the 11th grade assessment...	Students will need extensive supports in 12 th grade to raise their skills in English and Math, not limited to transitional courses and other tutoring/support. Students may need a fifth year or summer bridge program.	If a student does not reach the equivalent of a level 3 after taking a transition course, he or she will need to follow the institution's requirements for placement exams.	

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Considerations:

The group identified a number of items that require further investigation or decisions. An implementation sub-group will be formed to work on some of the implementation issues:

Policy must be established as a benefit for students who score highly while avoiding the unintended consequence of penalizing and/or tracking students who do not score at a level "3" or "4."

For students who are College Ready (ALD 3 or 4):

- Dual credit has increased considerably over the past few years. Will the recommendation that students take dual credit increase the need for dual credit courses? Has this been accounted for already with the work being done with dual credit? What work is going on related to accelerated options? If there funding to expand these options?
- Alternatives should be developed for any student who takes accelerated courses prior to grade 12.
- Do these recommendations need to include provisions about whether or not students scoring a "4" on the Smarter Balanced assessment have priority over students who score a "3" if access to accelerated credit programs is limited (by resources, etc.)? Is this handled at a district level?

For students who are not College ready (ALD 1 or 2)

- Some states include other factors for support (family history, etc.) in addition to academic supports. How are the supports (cohort, advisor, college access and support course, etc.) that the student needs systematically identified?
- How do we ensure that these supports are available for students?
- What mechanism is in place to ensure that students continue to receive additional supports in postsecondary?
- Schools currently have a mechanism in place for additional high school time in order to graduate. How will this policy impact those programs?

General considerations for the system:

- Smarter Balanced will achievement standards may change as Smarter Balanced continues to validate the achievement standards for all levels through 2016-17. Validation will include evaluating how well students perform in college and comparing the achievement standards with PARCC, NAEP, ACT, SAT. How will changes in these scores affect policy as they evolve?
- How are students impacted by the fact that there currently aren't any re-test options? In 2014-15, at least, students will only have one opportunity to complete the assessment at each grade level.
- In 2014-15, at least, Oregon districts will not be purchasing the Smarter Balanced Formative and Interim Assessments in 2014-2015 to prepare and monitor student performance on the the

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Draft 4.0-September 2014

assessment. How does this impact scheduling and interventions we may recommend for students?

- The primary recommendation from the group for how to minimize risk included establishing guidelines for how a student who did not score a “3” or a “4” could use additional evidence to be considered College and Career Ready. The guidance requires planning the coordinated use of additional sources of evidence, such as portfolios and other assessment results alongside Smarter Balanced scores. How will this be coordinated?

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- Are there alternative ways to demonstrate college readiness prior to the 11th grade assessment? For example, if dual credit requirements are changed to allow for ninth graders to take dual credit, how will students demonstrate readiness if there is no ninth grade exam?
- If there is a difference between other measurements used in high school (such as ACT, proficiency-based grading, etc.) how will that be reconciled?
- Are there separate considerations/interventions depending on where the student falls on the ALD continuum (low-meets versus high-meets) when cut scores are established?
- Will there be a type of early warning system at grade 3 and 8 to identify needs before grade 11?
- If the Smarter Balanced assessment is not available for a twelfth grade retake, what other measure will be used to evaluate progress towards college and career readiness for those who did not meet the 11th grade assessment readiness benchmark and have subsequently done some type of intervention?
- Would a portfolio/other assessment be acceptable alternative to SBAC?
- What other alignment of scores (besides SAT, ACT, and NAEP) will then need to take place between SBAC and other assessments?
- What are the FERPA/student consent issues related to releasing SB scores?

Related Work

The recommendations in this report are tied to many initiatives across the state, including accelerated options and the developmental education redesign. In October 2014, SREB will present to the OR Cross-sector group run by the OEIB to begin discussions about availability of SREB courses. Additionally, work is underway to connect to current research that EdNW and Oregon Department of Education are conducting to look at the Eastern Promise grants. We have discussed adding Smarter Balanced scores to the data being collected, as well as twelfth grade courses that students might be taking as part of accelerated college options through Eastern Promise and the replication sites. This will begin to give us a picture of how students perform on the Smarter Balanced scores and their subsequent performance in courses in twelfth grade.

CitationS:

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Hodara, forthcoming paper. Currently under review.

Scott-Clayton, J. (2012). *Do high-stakes placement exams predict college success?* (CCRC Working Paper No. 41). New York, NY: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center

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