

Dear Parent/Guardian

With the 2015-16 school year well under way, I wanted to take a moment to provide some important information about this year's state tests.

Last spring, students in the Mapleton School District and around Oregon took new state tests in English Language Arts and Math, called Smarter Balanced. The tests move away from previous fill-in-the bubble exams that focused on rote memorization, to a format which asks students to explain their reasoning and write out their answers. These new tests measure more complex, real-world skills such as critical-thinking, writing, and problem solving so that your child can successfully transition from grade to grade and be prepared for his or her next steps after high school.

Mapleton School District will give Smarter Balanced tests beginning in March of 2016. The tests are not timed so your child can take as long as he or she needs to fully demonstrate what he or she knows and can do.

We know that an end-of-the-year test cannot possibly tell us *everything* about your child's academic progress. However, the results do act as a snapshot of your child's strengths and areas for improvement and can be used as a way to ensure he or she is getting the supports he or she needs. Additionally, the tests help Mapleton School District's efforts to equitably distribute resources and support student learning. When fewer students take the test, we are left with an incomplete and inaccurate picture of how our students are performing, and this limits our ability to address issues, better serve students, and continue to improve our educational system.

Included with this letter is a form that allows you to opt your child out of testing for the 2015-16 school year. The form is also posted online on our website here: www.mapleton.k12.or.us. Should you wish to opt your child out, please submit the form to Jodi O'Mara at the Mapleton School District Office. You can read more about your rights to opt-out here: <http://tinyurl.com/OR-HB2655>.

In the Mapleton School District, we are deeply committed to ensuring each and every student in our schools has the supports he or she needs to achieve at high levels and graduate prepared for his or her next steps. Our ultimate goal is to make sure that all students are set up to be successful from grade to grade and that will remain the focus of our district throughout the rest of the school year.

If you have general questions or want more information about the end-of-year tests, please see the attached factsheet or visit our website at www.mapleton.k12.or.us. I encourage you to reach out to your child's teacher(s) with any questions you may have about your student's progress.

Sincerely,

Jodi O'Mara, Superintendent
Mapleton School District
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