

Spring 2013 Test Scores Frequently Asked Questions Teachers/Principals

What do I tell my parents if they are concerned their child is starting to struggle in school?

- Assure your parents that we have raised the educational bar in Oklahoma. We have asked teachers to shift their instructional methods and then we asked our students to take a much different, more difficult test.
- Assure your parents that as teachers and students become more accustomed to the new more rigorous standards and assessments, test scores will return to normal.

Will this happen again next year?

- As we continue to fully implement the college and career ready standards, we expect to see an initial drop in the first round of test scores aligned to those individual subjects.
- The Oklahoma Academic Standards in English and math are to be fully implemented by the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year. The tests aligned to those subjects will be given in 2014-2015.

Some of my high school students left for summer break believing they scored proficient or above on the Biology I test. When they returned to school this year we learned some of those scores were below proficient. How do I explain this?

- Because cut scores are set after a new assessment is given for the first time no one knew what the new scores for proficient was during the testing window.
- The process for setting cut scores is well defined, set according to a proper timeline and released this summer.

Why can't cut scores be set before students take tests?

- Most testing experts, strongly recommend setting cut scores after the live administration of a test.
- The most defensible standards setting techniques rely on knowing how many students get each item on the test correct. To have the most accurate information about the difficulty of each item, it is necessary to wait until students actually take the exam at a time when the test counts.
- Upon the advice of our Technical Advisory Committee, the State Department of Education has relied on this method or similar methods for setting cut scores since the state began creating assessments to measure what our

children have learned.

Why increase the rigor of tests and raise the cuts scores all in the same year.

- Increasing cuts scores is part of implementing more rigorous academic standards.
- If our goal is to increase student achievement to prepare our children for college, career and citizenship, then we must expect them to answer test questions correctly at a level that allows for them to be successful in credit-bearing college coursework and careers.
- We increased the rigor to be compliant with state law. If academic standards are increased, more rigorous assessments naturally follow.

How will these and future test scores affect my evaluation under the Teacher Leader Effectiveness (TLE) initiative?

- The vendor, Urban Policy Development (UPD), assisting the State Department of Education in determining the Value Added component will provide recommendations to the TLE Commission and State Board of Education about how to handle these differences in test scores from previous assessments.

How will these and future test scores affect my school's/district's A-F Report Card?

- The test scores writing and science from spring 2013 will be reflected on school and district A-F Report Cards.
- The State Department of Education will include an asterisk next to the writing, science and Biology I test scores and a footnote on the report cards explaining these are scores from new tests and should not be compared to last year's test scores.

I understand the new assessments are more challenging but what can I do as a teacher/administrator to help my students through this transition?

- The State Department of Education has a number of professional development opportunities available for teachers and administrators to help in implementing the more rigorous Oklahoma Academic Standards. Please visit ok.gov/sde or call the State Department at (405) 521-3301 to learn more about how you can take advantage of these opportunities.
- Some of our professional development opportunities include:
 - The REAC³H Network, an instructional team that delivers professional development to classroom teachers and school administrators in regional trainings throughout the state.
 - Sixty REAC³H Coaches who provide literacy training to teachers in their classrooms.
 - The PD on Your Plan program. When launched this will provide virtual professional development teachers can access during their planning period.

This means instructional time will not be taken away from students in the classroom.

- OKMath/OKSci program modeled after Leadership Oklahoma. This program creates leaders who can identify challenges and create solutions for math and science educators. They also can serve as a support system during implementation of the Oklahoma Academic Standards.
- Convenings of English, math and science teachers who work to determine the needs of teachers for implementation of the more rigorous standards and develop resources and tools to address those needs.
- A partnership with the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) project that increases access to Advanced Placement courses for students and provides training and resources in AP coursework to teachers.
- The school improvement program that helps our most struggling schools.