

Superintendent Juneau Releases Smarter Balanced Scores, Cuts Standardized Testing Time

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HELENA – Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau today announced public high school juniors will no longer be required to take the annual Smarter Balanced assessment, and instead will take the ACT.

“Montana is one of 13 states that provides the ACT to all juniors for free, it doesn’t make sense to ask juniors to take the ACT and the Smarter Balanced assessment,” Superintendent Juneau said. “The change will cut testing time for public high school students by two-thirds, and allow them to focus on preparing for college and career.”

Testing time will also be cut for all other grades because Montana will no longer participate in the Smarter Balanced classroom activity.

Montana students in grades 3-8 and 11 took the Smarter Balanced assessment last spring, replacing the outdated Criterion Reference Test (CRT). The new test is aligned to the state’s more-rigorous math and English/language arts standards.

Due to a series of technical glitches with the Smarter Balanced test, Superintendent Juneau let districts choose whether to offer the required assessment. About 18 percent of Montana’s schools with eligible students didn’t test. Because some students experienced a testing irregularity during the 2014/2015 assessment, results may not be an accurate reflection of student, school or district performance. The 2014/2015 scores will not be used for state accountability purposes.

Because the Smarter Balanced test is aligned to Montana’s new math and English/language arts standards, results are not comparable to previous statewide assessments.

2014/2015 Smarter Balanced Results – Statewide Average

- 38 percent of students proficient in math
- 54,749 math tests scored, out of 76,000 possible test takers
- 45 percent of students proficient in English/language arts
- 54,182 English/language arts tests scored, out of 76,000 possible test takers

Find results by grade or by school, in this

toolkit: http://opi.mt.gov/curriculum/MontCAS/Index.html?gpm=1_4

“I’m committed to making sure each and every student in Montana graduates from high school prepared for success in college and their careers,” Superintendent Juneau said. “Change isn’t

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Exhibit 8

easy, and it will take time for the good work happening in our schools to be reflected in test results from one assessment given on one day of the year.”

Superintendent Juneau is confident next year’s Smarter Balanced assessment will be a seamless process because Montana’s vendor, Measured Progress, plans to contract with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to deliver the test on its proprietary platform at no extra cost. This is the same platform Montana students used during the 2013/2014 field test, and 12 other states successfully use the system for their assessments.

“All of the technical problems from last spring’s test stemmed from using the Smarter Balanced open-source platform, developed by AIR. I’m pleased Measured Progress and AIR are negotiating to deliver to Montana’s students a test we know works,” Superintendent Juneau said.

Because of the technical challenges schools faced in 2014/2015, the Montana Office of Public Instruction has reached an agreement with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium saving Montana half (\$375,596) of its annual membership fees. Plus, the agency will continue to withhold 10 percent of Measured Progress’ contract payment until the vendor meets its 2014/2015 contract requirements.

The Office of Public Instruction will save an additional \$183,000 in 2015/2016 by not offering an interim Smarter Balanced assessment, and by using the ACT to test public school juniors. Thanks to a partnership with GEAR UP, the Office of Public Instruction is able to provide the ACT to all public high school juniors at no cost.

Background Definitions

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium: The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) is a multi-state organization working together to develop next-generation assessments that accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness. The Smarter Balanced assessment is a computer adaptive year-end assessment where each student’s test is customized based on his or her performance throughout the test. Montana is a governing state participant in the Smarter Balanced consortia, means representatives from our state participate in all Smarter Balanced decisions.

Measured Progress: The Office of Public Instruction is in a five-year contract with Measured Progress worth \$6.62 million. That contract began Oct. 1, 2014. Measured Progress delivers the Smarter Balanced assessment to Montana’s public school students.

AIR (American Institutes for Research): Measured Progress is contracting with AIR to deliver the 2016 Smarter Balanced assessment via its proprietary platform. In 2014/2015, Smarter Balanced and Measured Progress used AIR’s open-source platform to deliver the assessment.