

# Sherman County School District

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January 7, 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian,

With the 2016-17 school year well under way, I wanted to take a moment to provide important information about this year's statewide assessment tests.

Last spring students in the Sherman County School District, and around Oregon, took state tests in English Language Arts and Math, called Smarter Balanced. The tests moved 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.

The Sherman County School District will start administering various Smarter Balanced tests after February 7, 2017. 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 support he or she needs. Additionally, the tests can serve as a graduation requirement and help the Sherman County 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.

If you would like more information about the tests or would like to inquire about submitting a form to opt your child out of testing for the 2016-17 school year please stop by the main office at Sherman County School. The form is also posted online on the District website at: <http://shermancountyschooldistrict.weebly.com> under the information tab. Should you wish to opt your child out, please submit this form to the main office on or before February 7, 2017. You can read more about your rights to opt-out at: <http://tinyurl.com/OR-HB2655>.

In the Sherman County School District, we are deeply committed to ensuring each and every student in our school system has the support 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 setup 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-the year tests, please contact the Sherman County School. I encourage you to reach out to your child's teacher(s) with any further questions you may have about your student's progress.

Happy New Year!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wes Owens".

Wes Owens

Superintendent