



HARRISBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT Office of Curriculum & Instruction

200 W. Willow St., Harrisburg, SD 57032 (K-5th Grade)
1300 W. Willow St., Harrisburg, SD 57032 (6th -12th Grade)
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Dr. Michael Amolins, 6-12 Curriculum Director Ext 6180 michael.amolins@k12.sd.us

Dear Parent or Guardian:

During the assessment window of **March 26th to May 4th**, learners in grades 3 through 8 and 11 will take the Smarter Balanced Assessment in English language arts and mathematics. Learners in grades 5, 8, and 11 will also take the South Dakota Science Assessment. The purpose of this letter is to give you an understanding of the test. It will also give you a few ideas for helping your learner do her/his best on the assessments.

The Smarter Balanced and South Dakota Science Assessments measure student proficiency in relation to our grade-level subject standards. In addition to providing overall scores in these subjects, score reports will provide information on student performance in the following areas:

- *English*: reading, writing, listening, and research.
- *Math*: concepts and procedures, problem solving and modeling/data analysis, and communication reasoning.
- *Science*: life science, physical science, earth and space science, disciplinary core ideas, cross-cutting concepts, and science/engineering practices.

The current content standards set high expectations for learners. This means that expectations for achievement are higher than they have been in the past. The scores represent a new baseline that provides a more accurate indicator for educators, learners, and parents, with students falling into one of four categories: *below basic*, *basic*, *proficient*, or *advanced*. Our school district is working to make sure that learners can meet the challenge of these new standards and succeed in high school, college, careers, and life.

Your child will take each assessment on a computer. Each test is “computer adaptive,” meaning that questions will adjust in difficulty to be responsive to your child’s level of understanding. Questions get harder as the test taker submits correct responses and easier as the test taker submits incorrect responses. As a result, each learner has the same opportunity to succeed and maintain a positive attitude towards testing, and should know that a wrong answer does not mean that they are achieving poorly. These tests are not timed, but we estimate that it will take approximately 3.5 hours for English, 2.5 hours for Math, and 2.5 hours for Science. Information about each assessment, as well as access to sample questions, can be found at

<http://doe.sd.gov/Assessment/>.

While your child's grades will in no way be impacted by their performance on these assessments, the results do serve as a way for our staff to determine how well we are meeting their needs as they progress through the state's rigorous learning standards. After testing is complete, and the results are analyzed by the state, you will receive a report showing your child's scores. A guide will be included to assist you in understanding the report.

There is no need to study in preparation for these assessments. We do, however, ask that you help your child prepare the same way that they would for every other learning opportunity: encourage your child to do their best, provide them with an opportunity to get plenty of rest at night, and that you make sure your child comes to school alert and fed on days that he/she has tests. Because these assessments are required by law, it is important that your child be in attendance on testing days. Making up a missed testing period means time out of class and the loss of important learning time that cannot be made up.

These assessments are very important for your child, their school, and the Harrisburg School district. Thank you for supporting your child during this assessment period. Please call your building administrator if you have any questions. We are confident that our learners will help us show what they know and can do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Amolins', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Michael Amolins
6-12 Curriculum Director
K-12 Testing Coordinator
Harrisburg School District