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Performance on state assessment exceeds expectations

PIERRE, S.D. – Student performance on the new state assessment of English language arts and math was better than expected, according to state officials. Assessment results were presented to the South Dakota Board of Education today, as a preface to the release of the 2015 Report Card, which will be available tomorrow on the Department of Education’s website.

At every grade level tested, and in both subject areas, more South Dakota students achieved at Levels 3 and 4 than expected – significantly at some grade levels. (See chart below.) Level 3 is considered the benchmark for proficiency.

“Overall, we are very pleased with these results,” said Dr. Melody Schopp, South Dakota’s secretary of education. “Students are being asked to demonstrate real-world skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, writing clearly and citing specific evidence. It’s a much more rigorous and meaningful assessment than we’ve ever had.”

The assessment is particularly meaningful for 11th grade students because the state’s public universities will be looking at these assessment scores as a measure of placement in college-level courses.

Across all grade levels tested (grades 3-8 and 11), the percent of students at or above Level 3 in English language arts was 49.5 percent. In math, the percent of students in all grade levels at or above Level 3 was 41.3 percent. These results are in line with South Dakota’s performance on a similar assessment called the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

State officials speculate that the difference between results for English and math may be a reflection of the increased demand for *applying* math knowledge – noting that there is an expected period of adjustment when new standards and assessments are implemented.

“Taken as a whole, these results validate the significant time and energy that individual teachers, school districts and the state have invested in moving to new standards that prepare our students to be ready for college and careers in today’s world,” Schopp said. “And, they provide a new baseline for student achievement moving forward.”

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The assessment results are one piece of data included in the 2015 Report Card, a review of South Dakota schools' performance based on multiple indicators. The Report Card will be released on Sept. 22 and offers a summary at the school, district and state levels.

In presenting information to the Board of Education, state officials noted that the majority of schools fall into a mid-range for performance, with outliers on both ends. "Kudos to those schools on the high end for their performance; some of them simply knocked it out of the park," Schopp said. "But it's those schools on the lower end that are particularly concerning and where we need to focus our attention."

Based on a school's performance on the assessment, as well as other indicators identified in a measure called the School Performance Index, schools will be classified as Exemplary, Status, Progressing, Focus or Priority. Those in the Priority and Focus categories will receive assistance from the state to address performance issues.

State officials offer two final cautions when reviewing assessment results. First, state test results are just one piece of evidence in evaluating performance. Second, comparing performance on the new state assessment to the previous assessment is not an apples-to-apples comparison.

To access the 2015 Report Card beginning Sept. 22, visit www.doe.sd.gov and click on the "2015 Report Card" banner.

Smarter Balanced (SBAC) Test

% of students at or above Level 3*

English Language Arts

	2015 State SBAC	Predicted State SBAC	2013 NAEP – SD
Grade 3	48.6%	38.1%	
Grade 4	45.4%	40.6%	32.0% proficient and above
Grade 5	48.9%	43.9%	
Grade 6	45.3%	40.5%	
Grade 7	49.3%	38.2%	
Grade 8	48.1%	41.4%	36.0% proficient and above
Grade 11	59.3%	40.9%	
All Grades	49.5%		

Mathematics

	2015 State SBAC	Predicted State SBAC	2013 NAEP – SD
Grade 3	51.4%	38.9%	
Grade 4	45.6%	37.5%	40.0% proficient and above
Grade 5	37.2%	33.0%	
Grade 6	34.5%	32.9%	
Grade 7	39.4%	32.9%	
Grade 8	39%	32.0%	38.0% proficient and above
Grade 11	38.5%	32.8%	
All Grades	41.3%		

*Levels 3 and 4 considered on track for college/career readiness; reflects students who met full academic year