

# What We Know About School District Required Tests

## Supporting Student Learning & Growth

In Oregon, our shared goal is to help students succeed in school and in life. Tests are a small part of the school experience. They serve as an important and helpful tool for teachers, parents and families. When tests are given throughout the school year, they can provide immediate feedback about what students know about a given subject. Test results also allow us to learn how the school system is serving students and areas for system improvement. Results let a teacher know when a student needs additional support or acceleration.. When used responsibly, tests are a way to inform a teachers’ instruction and create the best path for students to grow and learn.



## Implementation of House Bill 4124

Passed in 2022, [House Bill 4124](#) asked the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to:

- Create a survey to collect information from school districts about the kinds of academic tests they require students to take (and why) in grades Pre-K through 12, excluding statewide summative tests.
- Analyze data collected via the survey.
- Use the data to establish a set of recommendations and best practices that can inform policymakers and education leaders about testing in Oregon.
- Report the findings to the legislature by May 1, 2024.

Fall 2022	Winter- Spring 2023	Fall 2023	Winter 2024	Spring 2024
ODE facilitates workgroup to inform survey development	Survey development and continued engagement	Administer survey to school districts & Education Service Districts	Collect and analyze survey data	Write report and submit recommendations to the legislature

## Collecting Information From School Districts

ODE designed a survey, known as the District Assessment Inventory, with extensive input from workgroup members and education partners. Survey items included, but were not limited to:

- Name and purpose of tests required by school districts
- Grades and student groups participating
- Cost
- Who uses the test data and for what purpose
- Development (locally or vendor)
- Length of time spent testing

School districts had a four-month window to respond to the survey.

## What ODE Learned by Surveying School Districts

All school districts and Educational Service Districts in Oregon participated in the District Assessment Inventory; 87% of the respondents reported requiring at least one test.



232

Total number of different tests administered by Oregon school districts.

95%

Measure Language Arts and/or Math content knowledge

## Key Findings

- **Number of Tests:** Oregon school districts administer and require students to take a variety of local assessments, as indicated by the 232 different tests named by respondents.
- **Purpose of Testing:** The top three district-reported reasons for testing are to measure student progress, diagnose skills, and plan lessons. Most required tests were reported to have multiple uses and purposes.
- **Student Participation:** Students in elementary grades (PK-5) participate in more, but shorter, test events. Students in the secondary grades (6-12) participate in

fewer, longer test events. Language arts and math are the most frequently assessed subjects.

- **Student Participation:** Most tests (around 80%) are taken by all students.
- **Test Results:** Classroom teachers are reported as the primary users of test results, but the study did not require explanation of how those test results were used. Parents, families, and students were the second most frequently reported intended user group.
- **Test Results:** Test results are available within two days or less for 87% of the tests.
- **Time Testing:** Students spend an estimated average of 14.8 hours per year on district-required tests in elementary school, 17.3 hours in middle school, and 18.4 hours in high school.
- **Time Testing:** Students in Oregon spend approximately 2% to 3% of their total instructional time on testing, including district- and state-required tests.
- **Cost:** Half of the tests were reported to have no cost. Some of those tests, however, were included in larger curriculum packages.
- **Cost:** Districts spend on average just under \$8.00 per student (per test).

## Teachers

87% of responses said test data is intended to be used by teachers, followed by parents and families.



Total time spent on district-required tests

2%

or 15 hrs of instructional time.

## Recommendations & Best Practices

Survey analysis resulted in 10 recommendations and best practices regarding assessment in school districts.

1. Clarify assessment purpose and goals.
2. Align tests with learning objectives.
3. Use a variety of assessment methods.
4. Integrate assessment into instruction.
5. Leverage staff resources and technology.
6. Prioritize essential tests.
7. Optimize assessment timing.

8. Collaborate with students, families, and educators.
9. Provide professional development.

10. Regularly evaluate and adjust.

## Recommended Next Steps

### Clarity of assessment purpose.

School districts in Oregon report that the tests they require nearly always serve multiple purposes. The survey did not ask how the information is being used to improve instruction and support student success. ODE recommends that districts make clear instructional effectiveness of required tests at the classroom level.



**Leverage ODE’s OSAS interim assessments.** Thirty-four districts (15%) reported utilizing the OSAS interim assessments, which are provided free of cost by the Oregon Department of Education. ODE recommends use of the OSAS interim assessments.

**More Research is Needed.** ODE recommends a funded, mixed-methods inventory of district-required assessments (conducted annually or biennially). This would extend and deepen the reflection and collaboration begun by the District Assessment Inventory.

The *Right Assessment for the Right Purpose* assists Oregon educators — from educators in the classroom to district-level administrators — in building a balanced assessment system.

## More Information

Additional detail can be found in the [full legislative report](#).

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