

The New Tests:

- Will do a better job of measuring the range of content and skills that students have mastered.
- Will go beyond multiple-choice questions to include short-answer allowing students to demonstrate writing and analytical skills.
- Allow students with varying learning styles to demonstrate what they know.
- Have accommodations for students with disabilities or who are learning English built into the assessment.
- An on-line reporting system will provide clear, easy to understand data for parents, teachers and leaders.



How can you help to prepare your child?

- ✓ Lots of rest the night before.
- ✓ Healthy Breakfast to start the day.
- ✓ Remind them this test is to help them learn
- ✓ Review the tools and test taking skills
- ✓ Practice tests and typing skills.
- ✓ <http://me.portal.airast.org/training-tests/>

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MEA for Mathematics and ELA/Literacy

Spring 2015

Windham & Raymond
Schools

Smarter Balanced Assessment

The Smarter Balanced, also known as the new MEA, is the new standardized test that all 3rd-8th and 11th grade students in RSU14 will take this spring. This test was created to reflect the more rigorous National Common Core Standards. Previous state tests primarily measured student's ability to retain facts and demonstrate basic skills. The new testing system will measure the student's ability to do higher-level thinking, reasoning and analyzing for career and college readiness.



What will the Assessments be like?

- ❖ The assessments are all administered on-line.
- ❖ Students will be assessed in Math and English Language Arts (ELA).
- ❖ Math and ELA will have three sections each.
- ❖ Testing will be spread over a few days.
- ❖ Students will be able to take a break as needed.

Computer Adaptive Tests (CA) - Multiple choice questions. The test will adjust based on the student's answers to previous questions which will customize the assessment to the level of the learner.

Classroom Activity – short teacher-led activity done so that students have common background knowledge going into the Performance Based Task.

Performance Based Task – Designed to show students' ability to apply what they have learned to real-life problems.



WINDHAM RAYMOND SCHOOL DISTRICT
Regional School Unit #14

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Assistant Superintendent
Donn S. Davis

March 9, 2015

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are writing to share with you information regarding student testing that our district will be conducting in the upcoming weeks. As you may be aware, Maine Law requires public schools to have all students in grades three through eight and grade eleven participate in the *Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) for Mathematics and English Language Arts/Literacy testing*, developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. Maine uses this data for accountability purposes; it is one of the primary tools used by the state to determine the effectiveness of a school and its programs.

We are pleased that the state has opted to administer the MEA as it has several new components. First, the MEA includes a computer adaptive test. Adaptive tests are shorter in length and give us a more accurate score. This customization provides a fuller picture of a student's proficiencies and creates a more positive testing environment. Second, the MEA includes Performance Tasks. These Performance Tasks mimic real-world situations and opportunities to demonstrate their thinking skills, so they are a more authentic measure of a student's capability. Lastly the MEA is aligned to the Maine Learning Results, which RSU14 has been implementing over the past few years, so it will provide a more valid reflection of what our students know and are able to do.

We know participation in this assessment will be of value to our students and view it as an opportunity for learning, not just testing. RSU14 has always used state data to help inform our decision-making. The school level data is used to identify areas of strength and areas of improvement. Looking at trends, we can decide to make changes in programming to help with areas of improvement within a building or a grade level. In the past, RSU14 observed downward trends in the area of math and writing. Using the data, we were able to pinpoint the grade levels and provide successful support to students and teachers to make the necessary shifts in instruction.

Individual student data identifies areas of strengths and weakness for each student. This data point, combined with classroom assessments and teacher input, can give parents a full picture of their child's academic progression.

RSU14 is committed to providing the best educational programming and support for our families. Since this is the first year of the new test, it will be a learning curve for all of us. We will do our best to help make this transition comfortable and productive for your child. Because this is a new process, teachers will be orienting students to the testing software by having students participate in the practice or training tests. Students will be able to experience the new software and have the opportunity to experience the types of questions that will be presented on the test.

In the next few weeks our principals will be sending out additional information regarding the specifics of when testing will take place in each school. Since testing is online, different buildings will be tested in different weeks.

We hope this letter and the brochure outlining the MEA testing has given you information regarding the upcoming assessment. If you have questions or concerns regarding your child's testing, please contact your building principal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sanford J. Prince IV". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Sanford Prince
Superintendent

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christine Hesler". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Christine Hesler
Director of Curriculum, Instruction, &
Assessment