

Testing opt-out/Refusal guide for South Dakota

Form completed by UOO Admin (LM)

Contact information (email) unitedoptoutnational@gmail.com

List of Assessments

Current Assessments in South Dakota (<http://doe.sd.gov>)

Dakota STEP:

The South Dakota State Test of Educational Progress (Dakota STEP) measures students' mastery of the South Dakota State Academic Standards.

High Stakes Test: Dakota State Test of Educational Progress (STEP)

From Superintendent Lowery Feb 13, 2013 Newsletter:

www.teaschools.k12.sd.us/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?

As a note, the 2014 Dakota Step test will be administered online and not available via paper-and-pencil. The Smarter Balance assessment will begin in the 2014-2015 school year. It will be an online assessment.

Common Core Assessments

Updated: Feb. 11, 2013 (Scheduled to be fully implemented in 2015)

The Common Core State Standards Initiative was launched by the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). South Dakota is a member of SBAC. The SBAC is a consortium of states that have been working collaboratively to develop a student assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and math. The SBAC focus is on assessing students annually in grades 3-8 and 11. The system includes both summative and interim assessments and will use computer adaptive testing technologies to the greatest extent possible. According to the S. Dakota Dept. of Ed., one of the primary desired outcomes of Common Core is to "emphasize standards-driven curriculum".

On Nov. 29, 2010, the South Dakota Board of Education moved to adopt the Common Core Standards. Beginning in 2015, English language arts and mathematics assessments for students in grades 3-8 and high school will be assessed using a series of "state of the art" online exams focusing on the Common Core Standards.

<http://doe.sd.gov/oats/AltAssessment.aspx>:

Dakota STEP - A:

The Dakota STEP-A is available for students who have a significant cognitive disability and are working in the Extended Content and Alternate Academic Achievement Descriptors and whose IEP's indicate alternate assessment for statewide testing.

This administration is prior to the Dakota STEP testing window in order to alleviate the workload for special education staff who administer both assessments. The test contains a rating form, and Supporting Evidence that is used to support the ratings given on the rating form. The rating forms are aligned to the Extended Content and are grade specific, focusing on reading and math at grades 3-8 & 11, with the addition of Technology at grade 8, and Science at grades 5, 8, & 11.

Alternative Formative Writing Assessment

(From <http://doe.sd.gov/oats/documents/5thGrComp.pdf>)

The Writing Alternate Formative Assessment was developed to instruct on the grade level extended content in grades 5, 7, and 10 and measure growth over time on the 6 Writing Traits (Ideas, Organization, Conventions, Sentence Fluency, Word Choice, and Voice). The formative assessment was not designed to be used as a onetime assessment score, but to inform teaching throughout the year. The testing window is from September 1 to April 30 with a requirement of two assessments to be administered during the testing window.

End of Course Exams:

In South Dakota, end of course exams are used for 2 purposes: students who wish to receive credit for a high school level course taken prior to entering grade 9, and students wishing to "test out" of a course without actually completing the class attendance requirements. All school districts wishing to participate in any end of course program must apply for, and receive, a waiver from administrative rule in order to give the exams.

The state has a selection of end of course exams which many be used. However, a school district may choose to create an end of course exam for a course that is not available as a state-created exam. At this time, the option of using of end of course exams in order to receive credit for high school courses in which the student completed the hour-attendance requirements is not indicated on the Department of Education website.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP):

Often referred to as "the Nation's Report Card," the National Assessment of Educational Progress compares student knowledge in a variety of areas to other students throughout the country. Its two major goals are to measure student achievement and to report change in performance over time.

NAEP provides results for the nation as a whole and for the states individually. Performance is reported by groups of students, e.g. aggregated scores, by gender, by different racial and ethnic groups, and by participation of special programs. NAEP does not provide results for individual students or for their schools.

The subjects of reading and mathematics are assessed at grades 4, 8, and 12 with national and state level results.

In 2011, South Dakota students in grade 4 students took reading and mathematics assessments and those in grade 8 students took reading, mathematics, and science assessments. A small number of South Dakota schools are also part of a grade 4 computer-based writing assessment pilot study.

NCSC Alt Assessment:

The National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) has developed a multi-state comprehensive assessment system for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Its long-term goal is to ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities achieve increasingly higher academic outcomes and leave high school ready for post-secondary options. A well-designed summative assessment alone is insufficient to achieve that goal. Thus, NCSC is developing a full system intended to support educators, which includes formative assessment tools and strategies, professional development on appropriate interim uses of data for progress monitoring, and management systems to ease the burdens of administration and documentation... This document is available in alternative formats upon request.

South Dakota Benchmark Assessment (SDBA)

During the 2012-13 school year, some school districts across the state participated in a new Benchmark Assessment Pilot Project for grades 3-8 and 11 in reading and mathematics. The following info was provided by the Dept. of Ed.:

There were four different testing windows throughout the school year. The Pre-test was administered Sept 4-14; First interim from Dec 3-14, Second interim from March 4-15; Posttest from May 6-17. Each test was estimated to take about one hour to complete.

Stanford 10 (Home School):

South Dakota students who receive alternative instruction are required to take a norm-referenced assessment at grades 2, 4, 8 and 11. The South Dakota Department of Education provides, free of charge, the SAT10 (Stanford Achievement Test) to children who receive alternative instruction.

WIDA/ELP Testing:

The WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test is an assessment tool used to measure the English language proficiency of students who have recently arrived in the U.S. or in a particular district. It is used to determine whether or not a child is in need of English language instructional services, and if so, at what level.

ACCESS for ELLs® stands for Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners. This large-scale test evaluates the progress of English language learners.

WriteToLearn:

South Dakota Codified Law 13-3-55 requires all public schools to administer an annual writing assessment.

Students in grades 5, 7, & 10 in all public schools use an online literacy program which provides immediate feedback on essay and summary writing activities. Students are required to respond to two teacher-selected essay prompts during the scheduled testing window which runs from September 1, 2012 through April 30, 2013. Revision requirements of the essay submissions are left to the discretion of the classroom teacher. Additionally, students are not limited to only two annual submissions.

Students in grades 5, 7, and 10 who participate in the DSTEP-A will be required to participate in an alternative writing assessment outside of the WriteToLearn program.

Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, school districts are no longer required to send student writing results from the WriteToLearn program home to parents.

Per the S. Dakota Dept of Ed website (<http://doe.sd.gov/octe/SMARTERbalanced.aspx>)

Career Interest Assessment

24:43:11:08. Testing requirements. School districts shall administer a career interest assessment by the conclusion of grade eight and a career aptitude assessment by the end of the fall semester of grade ten. The assessment used in the development of the student's personal learning plan shall be provided by the Department of Education.

Special considerations for the above assessments

None known of at this time.

Procedures for opt-out/refusal

No specific opt out or refusal provision can be found for general students. South Dakota expects all children to be tested, but is vague as to the consequences for not completing all tests. Official exemptions appear to be very limited. However, you may first attempt to see if your child qualifies. If they do not, then you may have to test the limits of refusal for the various tests.

<http://doe.sd.gov/oats/documents/dsaSigCog.pdf>

SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABILITY ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

On December 9, 2003, revised regulations providing new flexibility for calculation of adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind were published. The new regulations allow for the states to determine the definition of students with significant cognitive disabilities. Proficient and advanced scores of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities based on alternate academic achievement standards may be included in adequate yearly progress calculations, but may not exceed 1% of all the

students assessed, grades 3-8 and 11, in reading/language arts and mathematics. Caution is given to IEP teams to absolutely avoid over representation of those termed significantly cognitively disabled. Careful consideration regarding the use of standard and non-standard accommodations on statewide assessments is encouraged. In order to determine if an alternate assessment must be given, a student must be identified as meeting the criteria for having a significant cognitive disability. To be identified as having a significant cognitive disability, the student must meet all of the following criteria: 1. The student has an active IEP with annual goals and short term objectives/benchmarks which focus on South Dakota Extended Content and Alternate Academic Achievement Descriptors for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities; and 2. the student's cognitive abilities are 2.0 standard deviations or more below the mean (inclusive of the standard error of measurement); and 3. the student primarily requires direct and extensive instruction to acquire, maintain, generalize and transfer skills done in naturally occurring settings of the student's life. (e.g. school, community, home, vocational/career, and recreation and leisure) Documentation of meeting the above three criteria used to determine eligibility for significant cognitive disability must be maintained in the student's file, and the use of alternate assessment of the alternate academic achievement standards must be written into the IEP after such determination by the IEP team.

Urgency for opt-out/refusal

HST:

- Is not scientifically-based and fails to follow the U.S. Government's own data on learning.
- Fosters test driven education that is not meeting the individual/intellectual needs of students.
- Presents a racial and economic bias that is beneficial to white middle/upper class students and detrimental to second language students, impoverished students, and students of color.
- Is in opposition to the corrective action in gaps in opportunity and resources sanctioned by the Fiscal Fairness Act.
- Supports complicity of corporate interests rather than democracy based on public concerns.
- Fosters coercion over cooperation with regards to federal funding for public education.
- Promotes a culture of lying, cheating, and exploitation within the school community.

- Has used the achievement gap to foster a “de facto” segregation that has resulted in separate and unequal education for minorities.

Additionally, data collection of student's private information cannot be guaranteed security or that it will not be abused in some way by third party entities.

As Common Core is implemented, the number of tests and test-centric activities will increase dramatically. Low/poor test scores, which are likely to occur with more frequency with Common Core, will be used to fire teachers, replace human interaction with the internet /technology driven activities (even in elementary schools), and close community public schools and replace them with for-profit charter schools.

**Sample language to include in opt-out/refusal
Sample Opt Out Letter**

Dear _____:

I am writing on behalf of _____ to opt him/her out of the (test name). He/she is neither permitted to take the exam during mandated testing days nor during designated make-up sessions. Additionally, I am requesting that the school make accommodations for meaningful alternative activities or assignments that will continue to promote his/her academic and intellectual growth. My child will not be in attendance if academically viable alternatives are not available. Furthermore, I must be guaranteed in writing that whatever option is taken, either alternative assignments or absence, my child will not face any negative consequences to, for example, course grades, social or behavioral evaluations, workload, promotion, or future classroom assignments.

Strict adherence to state and federal high-stakes standardized testing, including the extensive classroom preparation that occurs prior to test administration, prevents my child from receiving a well-rounded and engaging educational experience. Until focus on testable skills diminishes to a reasonable extent, I will continue to withhold my child from participation in the testing program, and I ask that you honor that decision.

I do apologize in advance for the inconvenience or scrutiny that this decision may cause the administration, the school, and staff.

Sincerely,

Resources and organizations

According to the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools, South Dakota is one of 8 states without a charter law in the 2012-2013 academic year.

<http://dashboard.publiccharters.org/dashboard/policy/page/cap/state/SD/year/2013>

However, there is no specific group that appears to be blocking the advancement of corporate based education reform. In the 2012 ballot measure that defeated RF16, the bulk of the financial support for defeating the measure came from NEA.

State specific watch-list

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium:

South Dakota is part of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, or SBAC. The SBAC is a consortium of states that have been working collaboratively to develop a student assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and math. South Dakota is one of 21 governing states, which allows the state decision-making participation. The remaining six are advisory states.

The SBAC focus is on assessing students annually in grades 3-8 and 11. The system includes both summative and interim assessments and will use computer adaptive testing technologies to the greatest extent possible to provide meaningful feedback and actionable data teachers and other educators can use to help students succeed.

Additional or miscellaneous information

In 2012, voters rejected a referred law that would “Create a Teacher Scholarship Program; Create a Program for Math and Science Teacher Bonuses; Create a Program for Teacher Merit Bonuses; Mandate a Uniform Teacher and Principal Evaluation System; and Eliminate State Requirements for Teacher Tenure.” However, Senate Bill 25 was not sent to voters for a ballot approval. This bill permits the state Board of Education to establish “the process for teacher and principal evaluation” and, as a result, many of the requirements defeated by RL 16 will be put into practice by the Board of Education.

<http://www.argusleader.com/article/20121107/NEWS/311070055/Election-Education-reform-law-turned-back>

As of June 2013, a coalition of educators and administrators created a draft evaluation system based 70 percent on evidence of good teaching practices and 30 percent on student academic growth.

<http://www.mitchellrepublic.com/event/article/id/79810/>