

## Why do we Test?

As homeschoolers in Washington and Oregon, we are required to complete standardized testing.

- In Washington, students must meet this requirement annually starting when the child is 8 years old, typically in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- In Oregon, students must take a standardized test at the completion of the following grades: 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup>.

Though we are required to take these tests, there are also many benefits that come with it.

- As homeschoolers, we are constantly assessing our children on a day-to-day basis through dialogue, observation, projects, and quizzes. Most of the time we know exactly how they are doing. Standardized testing provides one more opportunity to see how our kids are doing. It is a snapshot at one moment in time that can then be used for comparison year-to-year as they complete grades moving forward.
- The results from testing can pinpoint problem areas that can be addressed the following year. As parents, we can reflect on what is working and what is not.
  - Do we need to focus on a particular subject or topic?
  - What changes, if any, need to be made next year?
- Testing can provide opportunities for students to get used to the testing process. It is a life skill that we use throughout our lifetimes. As adults, there are many times that we are evaluated or tested, whether in college or in the workplace. These situations become much easier to do when we have the skills. Because testing can often cause anxiety and worry for both students and parents, these become great learning experiences as we train our children on how to process through these challenging situations.

## Washington Options for Testing

*RCW 28A.200.010(1)(c) Ensure that a standardized achievement test approved by the state board of education is administered annually to the child by a qualified individual or that an annual assessment of the student's academic progress is written by a certificated person who is currently working in the field of education.*

### Option 1: Standardized Test

1. A standardized test is not a placement test or a test created by a curriculum. It is the traditional multiple-choice paper tests (though some are online now) with results that will be compared to other students in the same grade. Familiar tests include CAT, TerraNova, Stanford, Iowa, etc.
2. In order to be an approved standardized test you must use an acceptable test from this list - <https://marketplace.unl.edu/buros/> The Washington State Board of Education accepts any tests that Buros has reviewed. If it has been reviewed by them, it is approved. In most cases, only the most recent versions are acceptable.
3. Tests must be administered by a qualified individual. There are many places to purchase standardized tests. If the publisher or seller is willing to sell it to you as a homeschool parent, then you become the qualified individual.
4. After testing, the results will be given to the parent. Parent must keep records of annual test reports but are not required to submit them to the school district or to the state.

### Option 2: Assessment

In some circumstances parents choose to forego the standardized testing route. The alternative is an assessment which must meet three requirements:

1. The assessment must be written,
2. It must be performed by a WA certificated person (licensed teacher), and
3. The teacher must currently be working in the field of education.

### Resources

You can choose to test at home using providers such as [www.academicexcellence.com](http://www.academicexcellence.com) or [www.familylearning.org](http://www.familylearning.org) in-person group testing at Firmly Planted, or online group testing through [www.basicsskills.net](http://www.basicsskills.net) These are just a few options to help you begin.

## Oregon Options for Testing

*Oregon Law (ORS 330.035), all students who are homeschooled are required to test at the end of grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 no later than August 15<sup>th</sup> with a state-approved test administered by a qualified neutral person.*

1. A standardized test is not a placement test or a test created by a curriculum. It is the traditional fill-in-the-bubble paper tests (though some are online now) with results that will be compared to other students in the same grade. Familiar tests include CAT, TerraNova, Stanford, Iowa, etc.
2. Oregon has updated its law to include the assumption that a child who is 6 years of age is in kindergarten. Thus a child in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will turn 9 at some point during that school year.
3. Testing must be complete by August 15<sup>th</sup>. Parents must submit test results if their school district requests them.
4. Approved tests include the two most recent versions of the following:
  - a. California Achievement Test (or TerraNova),
  - b. Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills
  - c. Iowa Tests of Basic Skills
  - d. Metropolitan Achievement Battery
  - e. Stanford Achievement Test
5. A qualified, neutral person is not related by blood or marriage and meets one of the following criteria:
  - a. Holds a current personnel service license or teaching license from the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission; or
  - b. Has been licensed by the Oregon Board of Psychologist Examiners; or
  - c. Has met the publisher's qualifications for purchase, and has purchased at least one test from the tests listed; or
  - d. Provides evidence of satisfactory completion of a graduate course in which test administration and interpretation is included in the objective; or
  - e. Has previously qualified as a tester pursuant to paragraph (1)(i) of this rule and has during the previous year administered at least one test from the list of tests.

## Preparing for Testing

As testing season approaches, it is common for parents to want their kiddos to know how to answer all questions on the test. But a standardized test is not something that you study for. Remember it is only taking a snapshot of one moment in time to be used for comparison to other years.

It might help to understand the structure of a standardized test. It is comprised of questions that span a spectrum of difficulty. For example, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade test will include questions from the previous year (4<sup>th</sup> grade), the current year (5<sup>th</sup> grade) and the next year (6<sup>th</sup> grade). Because of this structure, the test will have some questions that are easy, some that are difficult or unknown, and some that are just right. This spectrum is given so that a realistic picture is created to illustrate how the student is doing.

Based on this structure, the goal is **not** to get every answer right.

“Wait, what? I don’t have to get every answer correct?”

No, you don’t.

The goal is to answer the questions to the best of your ability so an accurate picture can be created.

So... if we don’t prepare by studying, how do I prepare my child for testing?

### Testing Procedures

There are key aspects of testing that are helpful to be knowledgeable of:

#### 1. Fill-in-the-Bubble Questions

The simple act of filling in one bubble, and only one bubble for each question can take some practice if you have never done it before. The bubble should also be filled in dark and completely. Practice tests are available at <https://www.basicskills.net/product-category/practice-tests/>

#### 2. Using Time Wisely

When taking a timed test, it is important to be aware of how much time you are spending on a question. If you spend too much time on a question that can’t be answered, it is taking time away from questions that you might be able to answer. It is important to skip the challenging questions, answer the ones you

can answer, and then go back to the challenging ones if time remains. Remember, we want to measure how much you do know not how much you don't know.

### 3. Respect for the Process

The test itself does not determine the value or intelligence of your child. Your child is a unique child of God with many gifts, abilities, and intelligences. A standardized test is only looking at how well they are doing in reading, math, and language arts. That's it! Even so, use this as an opportunity to encourage your kiddos to respect the process and to do their best, as in all things.

### **Anxiety Prevention**

It is very common for parents and/or their children to be anxious or stressed about taking an annual test. It is important to remember that this test is not a something to worry about. We don't study for this test. We can't pass or fail this test. It is only evaluating where the student is at with their skills in language, reading, and math. At its heart, it is evaluating the difference between where the student was at last year in comparison with where they are at this year.

### **Healthy Habits**

On the day of the test, it is helpful to practice some healthy habits that set the student up for success.

- Get a good night's sleep,
- Eat a healthy breakfast,
- Calm any anxiety or concerns,
- Dress comfortably,
- Bring water and snacks.

## Test Results

After completing a test, a common thought response is "Did I (or my child) pass?". Remember that this test is not one that we pass or fail. Remember it is only taking a snapshot of one moment in time to see how the student is progressing in math, reading, and language arts.

California Achievement Test/TerraNova 2 Test Report						
STUDENT'S NAME:	Last Name, First Name					
DATE OF BIRTH:	02/04/2003					
NORM LEVEL:	END OF GRADE 8: 8.6 TO 8.9 (MAR, APR, MAY, JUNE)					
TEST DATE:	05/12/17					
CAT/TerraNova 2 LEVEL 18 -- SURVEY FORM C						
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SUBTEST TITLE	RS	NP	NCE	S9	GE	SS
READING	20/34	34	41	4	6.0	658
LANGUAGE	18/26	56	53	5	9.9	676
MATHEMATICS	22/31	64	58	6	10.6	705
TOTAL SCORE	60/91	53	51	5	9.3	680

There is a lot of information presented in the test results you receive. It can be hard to navigate all the acronyms, especially when we are just trying to find out how your child did. My advice is to look for patterns.

So what do all these scores mean?

### **Raw Score:**

This number represents how many questions were answered correctly out of the total questions. For example, in Reading, this student answered 20 questions correctly out of 34 questions presented.

### **National Percentile:**

This score is a comparison score evaluating how the student compared to all other students. For example, in Language, this student has a score of 56 which means that they did better than 56% of other students nationwide. A score of 41-59 is considered average.

### **Normal Curve Equivalent:**

This score is closely related to National Percentile. You will notice that they are very similar to each other and are on a scale from 1-99.

**Stanine:**

This is a score of 1-9. Because the result is a single digit number, it is easy to compare but not as precise as other scores. A score of 5 is considered average.

**Grade Equivalent:**

This number represents a grade and the month of that grade.

For example, 6.0 means 6<sup>th</sup> grade, no month (September of 6<sup>th</sup> grade) while 9.9 means 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 9<sup>th</sup> month (June of 9<sup>th</sup> grade).

Does this mean that an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student with a 6.0 score is doing 6<sup>th</sup> grade work? No, it means that their overall scores were hypothetically similar to students in the 1<sup>st</sup> month of 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Don't be discouraged! This does not mean that the child is at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level.

Conversely, this student scored 10.6 in Mathematics. Does that mean that this 8<sup>th</sup> grade student should skip 2 grades and be doing 10<sup>th</sup> grade work? It does not. It means that the student had overall scores that were hypothetically similar to a 10<sup>th</sup> grade student.

Based on these examples, it could be said that the student is somewhat behind in Reading but somewhat advanced in Mathematics for their grade level.

**Scale Score:**

This is a 3-digit score that is not super helpful for parents as we are interpreting test results. All of the other scores are based off of this number and the raw score so it is included. Again, not super helpful for us but it is how the other scores are calculated.

## What Next?

There are quite a few responses to test results. Choose what makes the most sense to you.

- Don't Look
  - Many families complete annual testing to satisfy their state requirements. Some don't feel like they need to see the test results. As parents, they are confident in how their children are doing. Many say they already know what their child is doing well in and in what areas they are struggling and don't need to even look at the results.
- Peruse and File Away
  - Some families like to look at the results only once. Oftentimes, it confirms what the parent already knows about their child. Sometimes it alerts them to the fact that they need to practice test-taking. As soon as they have looked over the results, they are quickly placed in their student's file and not looked at again until the following year.
- Use to Plan
  - Test results can often come back and provide insight into areas that the student is struggling or advancing in. This provides a great opportunity to adjust curriculum, add/remove specific topics within a subject area, or even alert us as parents something we might have overlooked or were not even aware of.  
From the results, goals for the next year can be created, planned for, and reflected upon as the year moves forward.

Overall, remember that these test scores are just a snapshot of one moment in time on how well your child is doing in reading, language, and mathematics. Don't allow these scores to overwhelm or discourage you.

As a parent, I have always appreciated the reminder that my child is a whole child – an emotional, spiritual, and physical being. Academics, though important, are not the only important aspect of their rearing up.

*"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." 3 John 1:4*