



Fern Ridge School District 28J

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Superintendent

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Dear Parent/Guardian

With the 2016-17 school year well under way, I wanted to take a moment to provide some important information about this year's state tests.

Last spring, students in Fern Ridge School District and around Oregon took state tests in English Language Arts and Math called Smarter Balanced. The tests move away from previous fill-in-the-bubble exams that focused on rote memorization to a format which asks students to explain their reasoning and write out their answers. These new tests measure more complex, real-world skills such as critical-thinking, writing, and problem solving so that your child can successfully transition from grade to grade and be prepared for his or her next steps after high school.

Fern Ridge School District will give Smarter Balanced tests this spring. The tests are not timed so your child can take as long as he or she needs to fully demonstrate what he or she knows and can do. **At the high school level, successfully passing these tests is a requirement for an Oregon diploma.** The practice our students get in grades 3-8 by taking these exams, helps prepare them for the high school exam they will take in the spring of their 11th grade year.

We know that an end-of-the-year test cannot possibly tell us *everything* about your child's academic progress. However, the results do act as a snapshot of your child's strengths and areas for improvement and can be used as a way to ensure he or she is getting the supports he or she needs. Additionally, the tests help Fern Ridge School District's efforts to equitably distribute resources and support student learning. **When fewer students take the test, we are left with an incomplete and inaccurate picture of how our students are performing, and this limits our ability to address issues, better serve students, and continue to improve our educational system. The participation of your student is greatly appreciated.**

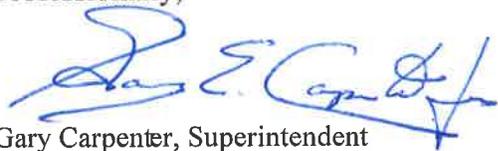
While we discourage opting-out of the exams for several reasons (a few of them mentioned above), included with this letter is a form that allows you to opt your child out of testing for the 2016-17 school year. The form is also posted online on our district website. Should you wish to opt your child out, please submit the form to your child's school's main office. You can read more about your rights to opt-out here: <http://tinyurl.com/OR-HB2655>.

In Fern Ridge School District, we are deeply committed to ensuring each and every student in our schools has the supports he or she needs to achieve at high levels and graduate prepared for his or her next steps. Our ultimate goal is to make sure that all students are set up to be successful from grade to grade and that will remain the focus of our district throughout the rest of the school year.

The Fern Ridge School District is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

If you have general questions or want more information about the end-of-year tests, please do not hesitate to contact the school directly. I encourage you to reach out to your child's teacher(s) with any questions you may have about your student's progress.

Professionally,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gary Carpenter". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Gary Carpenter, Superintendent