

Dear Parent or Guardian:

From March 12<sup>th</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> students in grades 3-8 and 11 will take the Smarter Balanced Assessment in English/ Language Arts and Mathematics. The DSTEP Science assessment will also be given in grades 5,8, and 11. The purpose of this letter is to give you an understanding of the test. It will also give you a few ideas for helping your student do her/his best on the test. Our guidance counselor has scheduled the testing for grades 7-11 and each elementary teacher will schedule the testing for their own classroom during the testing window.

The Smarter Balanced assessments measure student achievement in relation to our state standards in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics. In addition to providing overall scores in those two subjects, score reports will provide information on student performance in the following areas:

English: reading, writing, listening, and research.

Math: concepts and procedures; problem solving and modeling/data analysis; and communicating reasoning.

The new content standards set higher expectations for students. This means that expectations for student achievement are higher than they used to be. As a result, it is likely that fewer students will score at the higher achievement levels on the assessments, especially the first few years. These results do not mean that schools are performing worse or that students are learning less. The scores represent a new baseline that provides a more accurate indicator for educators, students, and parents. Our school is working to make sure that students can meet the challenge of these new standards and succeed in high school and beyond.

Your child will take the tests on a computer. The assessments are unique in the way they adapt to be appropriate for your child's level of learning. As a result, each student has the same opportunity to succeed and maintain a positive attitude towards testing. These tests are not timed, but we estimate that it will take a similar amount of time as did past assessments. We estimate the English assessment will take 3.5 hours and the math assessment will take 2.5 hours.

While your child's grades will not be impacted by their performance on this assessment, this assessment serves as a way for the school to see how well we are helping students meet rigorous learning standards. Shortly after the testing period is complete, you will receive a report showing your child's scores.

There is no need to study in preparation for the assessments. We do, however ask that you encourage your children to do their best and get plenty of rest the night before the assessment. It is important that you make sure your child comes to school on days that he/she has tests. Making up a missed test means time out of class and losing important learning time that cannot be made up.

Information about the assessment and access to the Practice Tests can be found at <http://sd.portal.airast.org/>. Click on the Students and Families tab for more details.

This testing is very important for your child and the Bison School District. Thank you for supporting your child and our school during the test. Please call if you have any questions. We know that Bison School District's students will help us show what our students know and can do.

**Sincerely,**

**Marilyn L. Azevedo**  
**Superintendent**