

Press Release

Ponca City Public Schools Explains New State Assessment Scores Released this Week

Oklahoma families this week will receive the results of the Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP) assessments administered in spring 2017. Given in grades 3-8 and 10, these tests measured knowledge and skills from the new and comprehensive Oklahoma Academic Standards, which were adopted in spring 2016 and first taught and assessed last school year. Additional results include those for science in grades 5, 8 and 10 and U.S. history in high school.

Providing a clear-eyed look at how Oklahoma student academic performance compares nationally, the results reflect alignment to critical national benchmarks, including the ACT, SAT and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), otherwise known as “the Nation’s Report Card.”

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister noted that the assessments represent “a total reset” that is incomparable to previous years. “Over the past three years, Oklahoma has undertaken transformational work needed to ensure all of our students are prepared for the next steps after high school graduation,” she said. “We have eliminated a culture of over-testing that robbed classrooms of valuable instructional time and failed to lead to academic gains. In a teacher-driven process, we developed academic standards and assessments that accurately reflect the skills and knowledge our kids will need for college or the workforce of the future.”

There are a number of reasons for the changes. The job market, both nationally and on the state level, is changing rapidly. Estimates suggest that by 2025, only 23 percent of Oklahoma jobs will be available to those with no more than a high school diploma. Currently, the number is double that, pointing to an imminent “workforce gap” that educators must work to close.

On the ACT test of college readiness, only 25 and 37 percent of Oklahoma’s high school seniors met ACT benchmarks in math and reading/English language arts, respectively. As a result, Oklahoma families spend more than \$22 million annually on remedial college coursework, none of which earns college credit.

For the spring 2017 test results, far fewer students will score *Proficient or Advanced* on the tests, the expected result of more comprehensive and challenging academic standards and assessments. The bar has been raised, with the definition of *Proficient* now meaning on track for college or career readiness.

The spring 2017 Ponca City Oklahoma School Testing Program results reflected comparatively with the alignment to national benchmarks. In the grades and subjects tested, the district met or outperformed the state averages in the following areas: 4th Grade English/Language Arts, 4th Grade Math, 5th Grade English/Language Arts, 5th Grade Math, 5th Grade Science, 6th Grade Math, 7th Grade English/Language Arts, 7th Grade Math, 8th Grade Science, and 10th Grade History.

East Middle School outperformed the state and NAEP averages in both 8th Grade English/Language Arts and 8th Grade Math.

Ponca City High School Juniors, who took the ACT during the 2017 Spring Testing window, outperformed the state averages for this nationally normed assessment in all of the core areas including English, Math, Reading, and Science. The Composite Scores, or those meeting benchmarks in all core subjects, surpassed the state average as well.

Ponca City School Superintendent Shelley Arrott stated, “In all grades through 8th, Ponca City teachers have been creating curriculum maps, formative assessments, and scales to prepare our students to be college and career ready with the implementation of the Oklahoma Academic Standards. These comprehensive, more complex standards require students to use deeper levels of thinking or understanding through the lens of Depth of Knowledge (DOK), which is a common term educators use to determine the complexity of tasks. I believe the diligent work of our teachers through the Professional Learning Community process, positively impacted the academic success of our students.”

Arrott continued, “Our teachers at the high school level focused on the ACT standards to plan for instruction and to monitor students’ progress toward mastery of these standards, rather than focusing on the adopted standards. It had previously been determined all juniors would have the opportunity to take the ACT assessment. This foresight of focus on the ACT standards maximized the performance of our juniors taking the assessment. Next year, all juniors will take the ACT assessment as part of the Oklahoma School Testing Program.

Hofmeister said the increased expectations and focus on postsecondary success are critical to Oklahoma’s future and cautions against any type of apples to oranges comparisons between this year’s results and those of previous years.

“The numbers in this week’s reports may be startlingly different than what families are accustomed to seeing,” Hofmeister said. “They represent a new beginning and an important baseline for student and school growth and improvement over the next several years as Oklahoma continues to take critical steps to meet our overarching goal of ensuring academic success for **all** students.”

Arrott remarked, “Without doubt, our students likely did not perform at the same level as they had in previous years. But, with the total reset of standards and assessments, results simply cannot be compared. The prior years’ assessments were criterion referenced, or reflected minimum competency. The results from the 2017 OSTP are nationally normed, which provides baseline data for us to prepare our students to compete nationally. All Oklahoma educators and families want our students to score well nationally, which ensures preparedness for college and careers. I am excited about the opportunity to move forward with the focus of more rigorous standards and the academic impact this focus can have on our students. District leaders and teachers are already analyzing 2017 OSTP results to plan and make adjustments to support academic growth for the students of PCPS. I expect the diligent work of our students and staff to position our students for continual, national academic growth.”

Mary Ladd
Public Information Coordinator
Ponca City Public Schools
580-352-4188
laddm@pcps.us