

Communicating with Parents

I. July – October 2015

Our students are on the path! We have worked with educators, business leaders, and colleges to define the knowledge and skills needed for students to graduate from college and be career-ready. We have shifted our focus to teaching these higher level skills, and checking progress regularly to ensure our students are moving toward their learning goals. Now, with the new and better Smarter Balanced Assessments, we have the information we need to adjust teaching and improve learning, increasing each student's opportunity to succeed.

Message to Students:

- Think about your progress last school year and the subjects in which you learned the most. Look at the individual score report for information about your strengths and challenge areas in English/language arts and mathematics.
- Participate in classroom tasks using self-assessment and peer-assessment strategies to provide feedback. Collaborate with your teachers and be engaged in learning.

Message to Parents:

- Discuss your child's score report with your child and school staff. Ask questions about what resources are available next year to support your child's strengths and challenge areas.
- Collaborate with educators to plan home-based performance tasks to support students in applying new knowledge and skills in real-world situations.

Sample Email Text from a Teacher to Parents

What and How We Are Learning This Year

Welcome back to school! This school year we are planning ways to involve you as active partners in your child's learning. This means that as we start new learning and develop tasks to practice college- and career-ready knowledge and skills, we want you to share topics of interest to your child that can be incorporated into the tasks we provide in class. In addition, I will ask your child to contribute to discussions about the success criteria for the tasks and the rubrics we will use to decide if the students have met the success criteria for the learning goal. We will also work in teams for peer feedback and self-assessment.

At Back-to-School Night this month, my colleagues and I would like to show you what is changing in our classrooms related to curriculum, teaching, and learning. For example, some of us are preparing visuals to show students' starting points and expected ending points on the content area learning progressions with some model student work products we have already developed in class. Some of us may also practice a task we have done in class with you. We would like to encourage you to collaborate with your child's teachers on some real-world problems to use as the basis for home-based learning tasks that can extend your child's learning outside of the classroom.

I appreciate your efforts to encourage your child to participate in class and focus on his/her own learning. Please continue to support your child in putting forth his or her best effort to collaborate with peers and contribute to the positive learning environment we are building in our classroom community.

I look forward to speaking with you at Back-to-School Night or at any time that you have a question or suggestion to make the learning experience better for your child.

II. First Quarter Progress Report to Parents

Sample Email Text to Parents from Principal/Teacher

As we complete the first quarter of the school year, it is a good time for reflection on your child's successes in learning. As teachers, when we prepare progress reports for the first quarter, we think about your child's current status on the learning progressions and note the amount of growth that your child has made since the beginning of school. It is helpful for students to collect examples of their work to show where they started and their progress to date. Here are some guiding questions that we consider as we reflect on students' progress:

- Has the student moved forward on the learning progressions? Is the learning progress where we expected it to be?
- Which examples of the student's work meet the success criteria for the learning goals this quarter?
- Has the student participated in self-assessment and adjusted learning practices to make more progress?
- What is the student's most successful learning event from the quarter?
- What changes will the student need to make in order to learn new knowledge and skills?
- Has the student been a positive contributor to the classroom climate? What are the student's strengths and challenges?
- Have there been opportunities to extend the student's learning to home-based performance tasks?
- What are the strengths and challenges of the home/school collaboration?

I would like to meet with you to review your child's progress and collaborate with you and your child on how best to meet your child's needs to maintain progress. Your child is completing the Self-Assessment Progress Report in advance of our conversation. We will discuss how his/her self-assessment and my descriptions compare and collaborate on a final progress report to discuss with you.

First Quarter Progress

Interpret Evidence to Assess Progress

Progress reports after the first quarter provide the opportunity for the teacher and your child to reflect on the evidence that your child's progress in understanding and applying the knowledge and skills of the Hawaii Common Core Standards is moving forward. By comparing evidence collected at different times during the quarter with the success criteria for the learning goals, we can see how well your child has met the success criteria and increased the ability to apply the understandings of the standards. Using evidence, we can set a new starting point on the learning progression for the second quarter. There are two progress reports, one filled out by the teacher and one self-assessment filled out by the student. The teacher and student collaborate to discuss the final description of student performance. Below is the self-assessment to be filled out by the student.

Self-Assessment Progress Report (Example)

The following learning goals for the first quarter were set with the goal of understanding and being able to apply the knowledge and skills from the Hawaii Common Core Standards:

- _____
- _____
- _____

The student and teacher collect at least four pieces of evidence for each learning goal from learning-event tasks, classroom assessments, and extended learning tasks, and compare the evidence to the success criteria. They give more weight to the most recent and best demonstrations of understanding and application of the standards. Based on this analysis, the student chooses the statement that describes his/her status on the learning progression.

Choose the statement below that best describes your performance for all the learning goals combined.

- I thoroughly understand and am able to fully apply the knowledge and skills of the Hawaii Common Core Standards addressed in the learning goals for the first quarter.
- I adequately understand and am able to apply the knowledge and skills of the Hawaii Common Core Standards addressed in the learning goals for the first quarter.
- I partially understand and am able to partially apply the knowledge and skills of the Hawaii Common Core Standards addressed in the learning goals for the first quarter.
- I minimally understand and am able to minimally apply the knowledge and skills of the Hawaii Common Core Standards addressed in the learning goals for the first quarter.

Next Steps:

Resources for Parents

Hawaii Statewide Assessment Program Website at alohahsap.org

- [2014–2015 Smarter Balanced Parent Information Booklet](#) The Parent Information Booklet includes information for the grades 3-8 and 11 Smarter Balanced ELA/Literacy and Mathematics Assessments and the grades 4 and 8 Hawaii State Science Assessments.
- [Elementary Writing Questions](#) [PDF] This document provides answers for common questions about computer-based writing assessments for elementary students.
- [Equation Response Editor](#) The Equation Response Editor tool is available for students to preview and practice with outside the testing environment.
- [Parent Fact Sheet](#) [PDF] This fact sheet provides information on how Smarter Balanced Assessments are preparing students for success.
- Practice and Training Tests can be accessed at <https://hsapt.tds.airast.org/student>

Smarter Balanced Website at smarterbalanced.org

- [Achievement Level Descriptors](#) (PDF)
- [ELA/literacy ALDs and College Content-Readiness Policy](#) (PDF)
- [Mathematics ALDs and College Content-Readiness Policy](#) (PDF)
- [Achievement Level Descriptors Glossary of Terms](#) (PDF)
- [Scoring Guide for Selected Short-Text Mathematics Items](#) (PDF)
- [Scoring Guide for ELA Full Writes](#) (PDF)
- [Scoring Guides for the Practice Test](#) (under “Resources and Documentation”)
- [Performance Task Writing Rubrics](#) (under “Resources and Documentation”) (PDF)

Common Core Standards Website at

- [ELA Appendix C: Samples of Student Writing](#) (PDF)
- [Mathematics: Designing High School Math Courses Based on the Common Core State Standards Appendix A](#) (PDF)

Hawaii Department of Education Intranet Site

at <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/StudentLearning/CommonCoreStateStandards/Pages/parent-resources.aspx>

Family Resources for New Hawaii Common Core Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments

Families are key in student preparedness. New standards (Hawaii Common Core) and assessments (Smarter Balanced) are creating shifts in the classroom that involve more dynamic, evidence- and technology-based learning than what classes used to look like a generation ago. We encourage families to review these resources to help students be ready to learn.

[Striving Higher](#) What you need to know about new standards and assessments, from teachers at the forefront.

Practice Tests for ELA/Literacy and Mathematics

Online practice tests can be accessed at the Hawaii Statewide Assessment Program website – alohahsap.org. Take the new Common Core-aligned Smarter Balanced) practice tests for a spin! [Click to launch the website](#), then follow these instructions:

1. Click "Practice & Training Tests" to launch the program.
2. Log in as a "GUEST"
3. Click through until you can select an ELA/Literacy or Mathematics practice test for grade 3-8 or 11.
4. Take the practice test!

Prefer non-interactive performance task questions? Connect with our [practice questions](#) broken out by grade level, which may be downloaded and printed for offline review and practice. These give an excellent overview of the kinds of questions students can expect to see on the performance task section of the assessments.

VIDEOS:

- Conversation: Mathematics — New tests require demonstrating knowledge [\[VIEW\]](#)
- Conversation: English Language Arts/Literacy — Reading for clues, like a detective! [\[VIEW\]](#)
- Conversation: Common Core — Making sure students "get a topic" before taking a step up [\[VIEW\]](#)
- Why is Math Different Now? — The value of teaching beyond memorization [\[VIEW\]](#)
- Why Common Core math problems look so weird [\[VIEW\]](#)

Resource websites

- **The Homework Help Desk:** Have a question about your child's homework? This site has aggregated frequently asked questions by grade and by subject. You can read more about a specific concept or watch a quick video that explains it in more detail. If your question isn't

answered below or you want to dig deeper, try asking a specific question to one of the trained teachers via live chat.

- [Go to Homework Help Desk site](#)
- **Hawaii's Parent Teacher Student Association** produced a "Parenting Resources" section on their website to help parents guide their children to success in school. Includes breakouts for the Common Core and information to boost parental involvement in helpful ways.
 - [Go to Hawaii PTSA site](#)
- **Great Kids Milestones** video series for grades K-5 provides a breakdown of what children should know by the end of each grade level.
 - [Go to Great Kids Milestones site](#)
- **Parent roadmaps, grades K-8:** Provides guidance to parents about what their children will be learning and how they can support that learning. Provides three-year snapshots showing how selected standards progress from year-to-year.
 - [View English Language Arts resources](#)
 - [View Math resources](#)
- **Military Connected Families:** The Military Child Education Coalition has come out [strongly in support](#) of the Common Core. For these families who are often on the move, standards provide greater clarity and predictability of student learning, regardless of zip code. MCEC has provided a handout for military-connected families to help orient them to the standards, and offer tips on preparing their children and ways to get involved.
 - [View guide](#)
- **Be a Learning Hero:** Website connects families with the best resources for standards and assessments — from trusted parent organizations like the National PTA, Great Schools, and Common Sense Media. It's designed to help parents support their child's academic success and, more importantly, to create a love of learning.
 - [Go to website](#)

Helpful handouts

Instructional Shifts: Information about and examples of shifts in English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) and Math, broken down by elementary, middle and high school. These were printed and sent home with students in January 2015, along with a [letter](#) from the Superintendent.

ELEMENTARY	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL
ELA	ELA	ELA
Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics

Factsheets: We've broken down some of the more complicated aspects of standards, assessments and public education goals and requirements into one-pagers that cover the basics. Want to learn more? Connect with your school's principal, or email the Department at doe_info@hawaiidoe.org.

- **Terms & Meanings:** There are a lot of terms to describe components of a child's education — sometimes they get used interchangeably and the meanings are confused.
 - [View Factsheet](#)

- **Smarter Balanced:** Common questions about the new Common Core-aligned assessment for students in grades 3-8 and 11.
 - [View Factsheet](#)
- **Mythbusters:** Setting the record straight on what Hawaii Common Core is not.
 - [View Factsheet](#)

Digital Media — be connected!

Sharing information about new standards and assessments along with success stories from our schools around the state.

- **Social Media**
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [Twitter](#)
 - [Pinterest](#) — and take a look at our [Parent Learners board](#)
- **eNewsletters:** Sign up by clicking "Subscribe" in the footer of this website, and view our archives here:
 - [Strive HI](#)
 - [Inspire](#)