

Dear Parent or Guardian,

From April 9th – April 20th, students in grades 6th, 7th and 8th will take the Smarter Balanced Assessment in English, Language Arts and Mathematics. Students in 8th grade will also take the South Dakota Science assessment during the week of April 23rd – April 26th. The purpose of this letter is to give you an understanding of the tests. It will also give you a few ideas for helping your student do her/his best on the tests.

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 South Dakota Science Assessment for 8th graders will measure achievement in Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCI) related to Science instruction. The areas of focus during this assessment will include strands of Physical, Life and Earth Space Science.

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 succeeds in high school and beyond.

Your child will complete all tests on a computer. The assessments are unique in the way that 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 over the course of 2 days and the Math assessment will take approximately 2.5 hours. 8th grade Science assessments are expected to 35-45 minutes per session, taking place during Science class for three consecutive sessions.

While your child's grades will not be impacted by their performance on these assessments, they serve 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 Smarter Balanced assessments can be found at: <http://commoncore.sd.gov/assessment.aspx>
Parents can access complete Practice Tests in English and math for grades 3 through 8 and 11 at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>.

This testing is very important for your child, *Sturgis Williams Middle School*, and the *Meade School District*. Thank you for supporting your child and our school during these tests. Please call if you have any questions. We know that *Sturgis Williams Middle School's* students will help us show what our students know and can do.

Sincerely,



Ann Nonnast,
SWMS Principal