The Assessment of Essential Skills – Frequently Asked Questions

This document is organized into five topic areas:

Requirements – Information regarding how the requirements are determined
Assessment Options – State Board of Education approved assessment options
Local Performance Assessment (Work Samples) – Guidelines and procedures for using work samples to meet the Essential Skills graduation requirements
Reporting – Information regarding how districts submit Essential Skills information to ODE, and how ODE will report statewide and district level information
Resources – Available resources for regional, district, and building level staff

REQUIREMENTS

1. **How do school districts determine which students are required to demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills for graduation purposes?**

   Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 581-22-0615 (Assessment of Essential Skills) describes that students who are receiving a regular or modified high school diploma are required to demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills based on the school year in which they were first enrolled in grade 9. The table below shows the Essential Skills required for students based on the year in which they were first enrolled in grade 9.

Essential Skills	School year first enrolled in grade 9		
	2008-2009 (most will graduate in 2011-12)	2009-2010 (most will graduate in 2012-13)	2010-2011 (most will graduate in 2013-14)
Reading	X	X	X
Writing		X	X
Math			X

   Please note that students first enrolled in grade 9 during the 2010-2011, or any subsequent school year, will be required to demonstrate in the Essential Skills of Reading, Writing, and Math in order to earn a regular or modified high school diploma. To view the full descriptions of the Essential Skills, please click the link below.
   http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/certificates/diploma/essential-skills-definitions.pdf

2. **Do the Essential Skills graduation requirements change for students who graduate early, or for those students who take five years to graduate from high school?**

   No, the Essential Skills graduation requirements are based on when a student is first enrolled in grade 9. If a student graduates early, on-time (within four years of entering high school), or late (five years or more of high school), the Essential Skills graduation requirements do not change. For example, if a student was first enrolled in grade 9 during the 2009-10 school year (4-year graduation track of 2012-13), that student would be

required to demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills of Reading and Writing to receive a regular or modified high school diploma. If that student were to graduate one year early (2011-12), she/he must still meet the Essential Skills graduation requirements of Reading and Writing (not just Reading); if the same student earns a high school diploma in 2013-14, she/he still must meet the Essential Skill graduation requirements of Reading and Writing (Math would not be an added requirement).

3. **How do I determine when a student was first enrolled in grade 9, so that I can ensure they meet the applicable Essential skills graduation requirements?**

The 'first enrolled in grade 9' school year is reported to ODE through the Cumulative Average Daily Membership (Cum ADM) collection, in the "high school entry cohort school year" field. Please refer to the 'Clarification Regarding High School Entry Year' section contained in the Cum ADM manual for additional information, link provided below. https://district.ode.state.or.us/

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

4. **What are the approved assessment options for students to demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills?**

The Oregon State Board of Education has approved a number of assessment options that students may use to demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills. These assessment options include the statewide assessment (OAKS), local performance assessments (work samples), and other standardized tests. To view the full list of approved assessment options, please click the link below. http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/resources/es_assessmentoptions.pdf

LOCAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (WORK SAMPLES)

5. **If students are using work samples to meet the Essential Skills graduation requirement(s), must they be completed independently, or are routine classroom instructional practices allowed (for example – group work, feedback and revision, work outside the classroom) while completing the actual task?**

The Test Administration Manual (TAM) describes that students using work samples to demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skill(s) must complete their work independently with no inappropriate feedback, coaching, or editing suggestions from anyone, including teachers, parents, or peers. See Appendix M (page M-6) of the 2011-2012 TAM, link provided below. http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/admin/2011-12_appendix-m.pdf

6. **May students revise a work sample and have it scored again?**

Yes, a student may revise the work sample after it has been completed if the teacher believes the student just needs to do a little more work to bring the score up to the achievement standard. In the case of a revision, the teacher may provide feedback in the form of the Official State Scoring Guide and/or the Optional Feedback form to help the student understand which areas are in need of improvement. Except for the use of these

forms, no teacher or peer feedback is permitted for work samples applied toward the Essential Skills requirement. Teachers may not discuss students' work with them, make any written or oral comments, or point out any specific errors or places in the work sample that need attention. See Appendix M (page M-8) of the 2011-2012 TAM for more information, link provided above (question #5).

7. **How many student revisions are allowed for a single work sample?**

   In general, students should have only one opportunity to revise a work sample that will be used to demonstrate proficiency in an Essential Skill, although it is up to district policy whether to allow additional rounds of revision. If a work sample is submitted for more than one round of scoring and requires only a minimal amount of revisions to meet the achievement standard (scoring 3s and 4s), then the teacher may decide to return it to the student for additional revision. On the other hand, if a work sample clearly does not meet the achievement standard (scoring 1s and 2s), it may be more beneficial to be used as an instructional opportunity for students who need additional assistance. See Appendix M (page M-8) of the 2011-2012 TAM for more information, link provided above (question #5).

8. **Are students required to take the statewide assessment (OAKS) prior to being given opportunities to meet Essential Skills graduation requirements via work samples?**

   This is determined by local school district policy. ODE does not require the student to attempt OAKS prior to completing work samples, or any of the other standardized tests currently approved as assessment options for the Essential Skills.

9. **Is there a requirement for student work samples to be submitted to the state for approval?**

   No, work samples fall under the category of local performance assessment and are both developed and scored at the local level. Therefore, the responsibility for determining if a student has demonstrated proficiency in the Essential Skills using work samples rests with local school districts.

10. **Can teachers provide glossary definitions for technical terms or extremely unique vocabulary in reading work samples?**

    Yes, if the word is something that most high school students would not likely know, the word may be marked with an asterisk or underlined and a short glossary definition provided at the bottom of the page.

11. **What is the difference between work samples used to meet the annual local performance assessment requirement and those used for students meeting the Essential Skills graduation requirements?**

    Work samples serve two different but related purposes for Oregon students. First, they are an approved assessment option for students to fulfill the Essential Skills graduation requirements. Second, they are an option to fulfill the annual local performance assessment requirement which ensures students in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school are afforded opportunities to learn and receive feedback regarding their academic progress

(often referred to as the "opportunity-to-learn" requirement). Work samples that are used for graduation purposes must be administered, scored, and potentially revised under strict administrative conditions. Appendix M of the TAM describes those conditions (link provided above, question #5). For work samples that are not being used to demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills but rather are used to satisfy the annual local performance assessment requirement, districts have wide latitude in setting the administrative, scoring, and revision guidelines. Some districts may anticipate using work samples for both purposes and in that case need to be aware of the administrative conditions associated with work samples being used by students for graduation purposes.

12. **Is there a limit to the percentage of students that may be allowed to demonstrate Essential Skills proficiencies using work samples, at the district or building levels?**

There is no limit to the number or percentage of students that may demonstrate Essential Skills proficiencies via work sample. Please note that work samples, along with the other approved standardized tests, may not be used for federal or state accountability purposes. OAKS is the only approved measure to be used for federal or state accountability. Please note that ODE will report on the number and percentages of how students are meeting the Essential Skills, both at the state and district level. See question #17 for more information.

13. **Is there a minimum score on OAKS that students must achieve in order to be able to use work samples to meet the Essential Skills graduation requirements?**

There is no minimum score on OAKS that students must achieve in order to use work samples or any other approved assessment to meet Essential Skills graduation requirements. It's reasonable to expect students scoring in the "nearly meets" categories on OAKS to be likely candidates to demonstrate proficiencies via work samples. Districts may choose to develop local policy regarding the specific criteria a student must meet in order to be eligible to use work samples for graduation purposes, such as requiring a minimum score on OAKS. Please note that ODE will report on the number and percentages of how students are meeting the Essential Skills, both at the state and district level. See question #17 for more information.

14. **May students use voice recognition software, such as Dragon NaturallySpeaking, to provide responses to reading work sample questions?**

Yes, voice recognition applications are allowable accommodations for students with visual impairments responding to reading work sample questions. For more information on allowable accommodations, please see the Accommodations Manual, link provided below. http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/testing/admin/alt/ea/accman-update-7-7-2011-12_hc.pdf

15. **If students use a scribe and/or audio device to record their work sample responses, can they receive feedback and revise the work sample?**

Yes, the same revision rules would be applied in this scenario as described in question #6 (listed above). The rater would score the transcription, and provide feedback in the form of the Official State Scoring Guide and/or the Optional Feedback form, to help the student understand which areas are in need of improvement. The student would then use the scribe and/or audio device to revise the work sample.

16. How do school districts report Essential Skills graduation data to ODE?

Districts will submit Essential Skills information to ODE through the Cumulative Average Daily Membership (Cum ADM) collection, at the time students are awarded a regular or modified high school diploma. Local school districts will submit the manner in which students demonstrated proficiency in the required Essential Skills, and the date the requirements were completed. For more information about the Cum ADM collection and Essential Skills data submission rules, please contact your regional ESD partner.
http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/oaks/esdpartners1112.pdf

In addition, districts are required to retain documentation of student scores for all assessment options eligible for use in meeting the Essential Skills graduation requirements through the time a student exits the public school system. For more information about Essential Skills documentation requirements, please see Appendix K (page K-5) of the 2011-2012 TAM, link provided below.
http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/admin/2011-12_appendix-k.pdf

17. How will ODE report on the Essential Skills?

ODE will be producing an annual Essential Skills report starting in the Fall of 2012. The information will be provided at state and district levels, and will be disaggregated by subgroups. Two important attributes of the report will be:
- a description of the counts and percentages of graduates by the source of evidence used/reported to demonstrate Essential Skills proficiency (OAKS, work samples, other standardized tests); and,
- a comparison of OAKS student performance data to other sources of evidence.

To view a draft outline of the Essential Skills Report, please click the link below and scroll down to the "Essential Skills Report Template for 2012" document.
http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2042

18. Will students that do not meet the Essential Skills graduation requirements in four years, and come back to school for a fifth year, be counted as "dropouts" because they didn't graduation with their 4-year cohort group?

Students that do not complete the requirements for a regular diploma at the end of four years are counted as non-graduates in the 4-year cohort calculation. In the event those students come back for a fifth year and complete the requirements, they would be counted as graduates in the 5-year cohort. Please note federal regulations inform how the 4- and 5-year cohort graduation rates are calculated. It is also important to note many "non-graduates" in the cohort rate are not dropouts. For instance, students receiving a modified diploma, extended diploma, GED, or Adult High School Diploma and students continuing in high school are non-graduates in the cohort rate, but do not meet the state or federal definition of dropout. In particular, the student mentioned above would not be classified as a dropout in any ODE report.
For more information on the cohort graduation rate, please click the link below.
http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2644

For more information on the dropout rate, please click the link below.
http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=1

19. **Are students allowed to appeal decisions regarding Essential Skills graduation requirements?**

Districts are required to develop a process which allows students to appeal district decisions to deny a diploma based on Essential Skills graduation requirements. More information on this issue can be found in Appendix K of the TAM (page K-5, link below):
http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/admin/2011-12_appendix-k.pdf

RESOURCES

20. **What professional development resources does ODE provide to support districts implementing work samples?**

The Office of Assessment and Information Services (OAIS) has created and is delivering workshops for each of the three required Essential Skills (Reading, Writing, Math). These workshops are designed in the "train-the-trainer" model, and are delivered via WebEx, free of charge. Regional or local district personnel receive the training from ODE staff, and are then sent the training materials (PowerPoint slides, facilitator materials, and ready-to-print handouts), and may then deliver the training to their respective organizations (region, district, building). For more information on the training sessions available (module descriptions, full schedule of training opportunities, and registration information), please click the link below, and scroll down to the "Essential Skills Work Samples Training of Trainers" document.
http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2042

21. **Where can I find more information about the Essential Skills and/or new high school graduation requirements?**

The Assessment of Essential Skills page on ODE's website contains lots of useful information and links to additional resources, such as the Assessment of Essential Skills Toolkit, TAM, Work Samples, Official State Scoring Guides, and professional development opportunities.
http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2042

The Assessment of Essential Skills Toolkit is a resource designed to walk administrators through the strategic planning process as they prepare for the Essential skills.
http://assessment.oregonk-12.net/

The Work Samples page of ODE's website provides examples of work samples tasks, student work (exemplars), and teacher scores/commentary for each of the content areas.
http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=219

The TAM has been referenced several times throughout this FAQ, here's the direct link to the document.
http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=486

The Oregon Direct Access To Achievement (DATA) Project is a collaborative initiative designed to help educators build capacity for using data to improve student achievement. The Essential Skills have been embedded in Strand 4 of the Instructional Training materials, please visit the website listed below for more information about the Oregon DATA Project.
http://www.oregondataproject.org/

In January of 2007, the Oregon State Board of Education voted to adopt new high school graduation requirements. For more information about the new diploma requirements, high school exit options, and additional resources designed to support implementation of the new requirements, please visit the website listed below.
http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=368