

Essential Skills

FAQ: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ TOPIC AREAS

1. Requirements	Overview and information about cohort year requirements.
2. Assessment Options	Approved assessment options, including information regarding work samples.
3. Reporting	Procedures for submitting data and information about the data that will be reported.
4. Policies	Policies the district is responsible for developing.
5. Resources	Available resources for regional, district, and building level staff.

1. Requirements Overview

1. a. What are the Essentials Skills requirements?

In 2008, the State Board of Education adopted a set of “Essential Skills” – foundational skills that all students will need to be successful in college, work, and life. Students must demonstrate proficiency in these skills in order to earn a diploma. In the past, graduation was primarily dependent on meeting credit requirements. With the adoption of the Essential Skills, students are now required to demonstrate they have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed after graduation. To help students prepare to meet the new expectations, the requirements are being phased in over a number of years.

1. b. 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 SKILL GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

SCHOOL YEAR FIRST ENROLLED IN GRADE 9	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011 and beyond
READING	X	X	X	X
WRITING		X	X	X
MATH			X	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>

1. c. Do the Essential Skills graduation requirements change for students who graduate early, or for those students who take five years (or more) 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 (more than four years 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).

1. d. 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/home/>

2. Assessment Options

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

The State Board of Education has approved three assessment options (OAKS, other standardized assessments, or work samples). All three options require equivalent achievement standards (level of skill) to pass.

OAKS	All students have the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills through Oregon’s standardized assessment, OAKS.
OTHER STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT	There are several other standardized assessments that have been approved and may be offered in a district.
WORK SAMPLES	Students can complete two passing work samples, which are developed, administered, and scored at the local level using the official state scoring guide(s).

To view the full list of approved Essential Skills assessment options and corresponding achievement standards, please use the link below.

http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/resources/es_assessmentoptions.pdf

- 2. b. May work samples be used to meet the Essential Skills graduation requirement be as a part of routine classroom instructional practices, including group work, feedback and revision, work outside the classroom, etc.?**

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 the Essential Skills Manual.

http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/resources/es_localperformanceasmt_manual.pdf

- 2. c. 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 only 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 Essential Skills Manual for more information.

http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/resources/es_localperformanceasmt_manual.pdf

- 2. d. How many student revisions are allowed for a single work sample?**

This is a local district decision. For more information, please see question 3.c, above, or the Essential Skills Manual, link provided below.

http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/resources/es_localperformanceasmt_manual.pdf

- 2. e. 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.

- 2. f. Is there a requirement for work samples to be submitted to the state for approval?**

No. Work samples fall under the category of local performance assessment and are developed, administered, 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.

2. g. 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.

2. h. 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?

For local performance assessments other than work samples, districts have wide latitude in setting the administrative, scoring, and revision guidelines. A work sample is a specific kind of local performance assessment that is an approved assessment option for the Essential Skills graduation requirement. Essential Skills work samples must be administered and scored using the official state scoring guide(s) under strict administrative conditions. See the Essential Skills Manual for more details.

http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/resources/es_localperformanceasmt_manual.pdf

2. i. 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 4.a for more information.

2. j. 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 4.a for more information.

2. k. 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 Essential Skills Manual, link provided below.

http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/resources/es_localperformanceasmt_manual.pdf

2. l. 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 3.c. 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.

3. Reporting

3. a. What is the Essentials Skills Report?

School districts report to ODE how each graduate demonstrated his or her Essential Skills (state test, other test, or work sample). ODE has compiled that information into a report which provides information both at the state and district level on the number and percent of students who used each option. The report also provides students' average OAKS level (very low/low, nearly meets, meets/exceeds) for each assessment option. This report allows districts and communities to examine trends in how students are meeting this new requirement. To view the report, click the link below and scroll down to the "Essential Skills Report 2011-2012."

<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2042>

3. b. 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/esdpartners1213.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 the Essential Skills Manual, link provided below.

http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/resources/es_localperformanceasmt_manual.pdf

3. c. 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 graduate with their 4-year cohort group?

Students who 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>

4. Policies

4. a. 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. For more information, please see the Essential Skills Manual, link provided below.

http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/resources/es_localperformanceasmt_manual.pdf

4. b. **What policies are districts required to develop and which policies are recommended?**

DISTRICT POLICIES

REQUIRED POLICIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How students can appeal a district decision to deny a high school diploma based on the Essential Skills graduation requirement. • Whether or not to administer work samples in languages other than English
RECOMMENDED POLICIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether or not to administer work samples • How to develop work samples • Whether district is willing to share work samples with other districts • Whether district can use/purchase work samples from other districts • Whether to administer work samples as needed or on at fixed times throughout the year • Whether there is a minimum OAKS score to be eligible for work sample • Whether to allow students to revise or retake work samples • Whether there is a minimum score on a work sample to be eligible to revise that work sample and resubmit the work sample • Whether district will develop work samples in languages other than English.

5. Resources

The Dynamic Integrated Scoring Calibration System (DISCS) is an online scoring guide training tool educators may use in calibrating to the Oregon official state scoring guides (Reading, Writing, Math). This resource can be accessed at any time and allows educators to self-guide and evaluate levels of proficiency by reviewing training materials, then scoring student exemplars and receiving instant feedback regarding accuracy.

<http://discs.orvsd.org/>

5. b. 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 Official State Scoring Guides.

<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2042>

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>