



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

January 12, 2015

Dear Parents and Guardians,

At the beginning of the school year, [I wrote to you](#) explaining that your child would experience more engaging and challenging coursework aligned to the Hawaii Common Core standards. The Hawaii Common Core focuses on what students should know and be able to do at each grade in order to graduate ready for college and careers. Think of the standards as guideposts that help teachers prepare students as they move from kindergarten through high school. Teachers are covering essential topics more deeply, providing students more time to master new information before advancing to another concept, and connecting lessons to real-life issues.

New expectations for student learning mean we need new ways to measure how our students are performing. So, starting this year, the Hawaii State Assessments for English language arts and math will be replaced with the Smarter Balanced assessment system. These new tests include interactive questions that allow students to demonstrate what they have learned in a variety of ways. They measure not only what students know, but also how well they can apply their knowledge in real-world situations.

We expect the change to the new test and standards will result in a drop in scores as compared to previous years. Lower test scores do not mean students are performing any worse - because these are newer, higher expectations for student learning. Results from this year are a new starting point for your child. They will be available in an easy-to-understand format to help you discuss your child's progress with teachers.

Attached to this letter is a guide explaining the lesson changes and what they mean for your child. Please take a moment to read it.

Teachers and administrators have been working hard to support all children as they learn to problem solve, be a team member, communicate and think critically – all the skills colleges and employers will be looking for once your child graduates.

Thank you for your continued support of your child's school and public education in Hawaii.

Very truly yours,

Kathryn S. Matayoshi  
Superintendent