



October 11, 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Within the next week, school districts will begin receiving information about student performance on tests taken last spring. While individual student scores will not be available until November, we want to prepare you in advance for test scores that will be dramatically different from what you have seen in the past.

Last year, Oklahoma schools implemented new math and English/language arts academic standards. We fully support these new standards, as they are designed to help students become more proficient creative thinkers and problem solvers rather than simply memorizing information.

The change in standards also required a change in testing. The new tests are designed to more accurately measure a student's academic progress and his/her readiness for college and/or career. At Union, we are committed to our mission to graduate 100% of our students, college and/or career ready." That is why it is important that we embrace these new higher standards.

With this change, Oklahoma test scores will align with national benchmarks like the SAT, ACT, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). It also means that our state is setting new, higher performance levels for English language arts and math in grades 3-8 and SAT/ACT in 11th grade, and for science in grades 5, 8, and 11. Performance levels – or "cut scores" – have been redefined.

As a result, Oklahoma will see a significant drop in the number of students reported as "Proficient" or "Advanced." This does not mean your student suddenly became less skilled than last year or that our teachers and schools have become less effective. It means that Oklahoma's scores have been recalibrated to align with the knowledge and skills students need in order to be ready for college and/or career.

This school year represents a new beginning and a total reset as Oklahoma sets new baseline scores for students in our state. NO COMPARISON is possible with student or school performance in past years. While there will be many concerned parents, teachers, and students when the student reports are released, we urge you to keep in mind that one test – or a single measure – does not tell us everything that needs to be known about how a student is performing. As a district, we rely on multiple measures over time. Learning is a process and not a race. We know this to be true as evidenced by Union's graduation rate of 90 percent. Our commitment to your student will remain high as we work toward these new state standards. It is our hope the state will now step up to adequately fund common education to ensure that we have sufficient resources to assist us in meeting these higher expectations.

Respectfully,

Kirt Hartzler, Ed.D.
Superintendent