

# Thomas D. Kershaw Intermediate School

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Dear Parents,

As an educator, I am fortunate to be able to witness and experience the wonder of learning on a daily basis. Schools are instructional institutions, and we are constantly looking for ways to improve. I believe that everyone within a school community is a learner first and foremost, and that it is the learning process which allows schools to achieve their mission. Just as individuals and organizations within the community must seek to improve their practice, schools should have structures in place to review their progress and implement changes. These changes should always be student-driven.

We set high expectations for all stakeholders and believe that everyone has a responsibility to ensure that they are doing their part to help the school realize its goals. As we enter this school year's end-of-the-year assessment window, I encourage all stakeholders to be open-minded and supportive as we embark on a "new" assessment entitled ISAT by Smarter Balanced (SBAC) aligned to the Idaho Core Standards (ICS). Local and national media are closely covering this assessment, and are reporting differing opinions regarding its validity and political agenda. My opinion, with any assessment, is that there will always be pros and cons. In the best interest of the students of Kershaw Intermediate School, I believe that regardless of our political viewpoints and understanding or misunderstanding of this assessment, we need to trust and support the process until we have a better understanding of this assessment's possibilities and limitations. Please note that all assessments have limitations and that no one assessment defines a student, teacher, school, or community. I also want to emphasize that every assessment that we administer provides us with another snapshot that we are assembling to know your child and to attend to their unique learning needs. We remain ever hopeful that this assessment will provide us with another set of useful snapshots for each individual student, but also for Kershaw Intermediate School as we work to hold ourselves accountable to deliver the very best education.

Here are two additional pieces of information that are important for parents to understand. First, 80 Idahoans (parents, teachers, administrators, board members, community members) went to Boise in December to review over 33,000 ISAT by Smarter Balanced test questions looking for possible bias or sensitivity issues. Through this process, the Bias and Sensitivity Committee made recommendations to revise or eliminate questions from the assessment. Second, I recently received a weekly report from the State Department of Education informing schools of the amount of time it takes an average student to complete the ISAT by Smarter Balanced assessment, and here are their findings:

	<b>English Language Arts (ELA) Adaptive Test</b>	<b>English Language Arts (ELA) Performance Test</b>	<b>Math Adaptive Test</b>	<b>Math Performance Test</b>
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	97 minutes	97 minutes	61 minutes	23 minutes
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	99 minutes	97 minutes	68 minutes	45 minutes
6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	100 minutes	73 minutes	70 minutes	35 minutes

The ISAT by Smarter Balanced will be broken up into four different sub-assessments that will be administered to students over the course of a three-week testing window beginning April 27<sup>th</sup> and ending May 15<sup>th</sup> (See Attachment). We hope to have created a testing schedule that is unobtrusive to the regular learning environment as much as possible while trying to capture our students' academic skills.

We look forward to the opportunity to gauge our students' and school's present level of performance (while keeping-in-mind this specific assessment's strengths and weaknesses), while working towards growing and improving to enhance your child's educational experience. I hope you know that no one at Kershaw Intermediate School, involved in your child's education, wants to do anything that would be counterproductive to what we consider to be best for your child.

I appreciate your open-mindedness and look forward to the opportunities to evaluate this process once it is completed with students, staff, parents, and community.

Thanks,

Neil Williams, Principal  
 Kershaw Intermediate School  
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