



Ottauquechee School

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Dear Parents and Families,

Last spring Ottauquechee's third, fourth and fifth graders participated in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium's standardized testing program (SBAC). Children from across the nation participated in the inaugural administration and were assessed in the areas of reading and math. In comparison to other Vermont schools, on average, OQS students did as well or slightly better than the state average. In math, 47% of our kids were at or above grade level compared to 46% state-wide. In reading, 56% of our kids were at or above grade level compared to 53% throughout the state. As a school we are cautiously pleased about these results, and recognize the need for more growth. Please know that we will reflect upon the information and use the data to improve our program.

In addition to providing the Ottauquechee School with a tool to inform school improvement, the SBAC is designed to meet the accountability standards under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which was passed by the federal government in 2001, requires that all schools' efficacy be measured annually based on their performance on standardized tests in English and Math. The state of Vermont has set the bar for what adequate student performance on these tests should be, and schools that don't meet that bar are identified under NCLB as being in need of "improvement" or "restructuring".

As a part of complying with NCLB, every three years, expectations for school performance on standardized tests have been raised. At this point, expectations for school achievement have reached the maximum level. In order for a school to be considered effective by the federal government, every student in tested grades in that school must test as "proficient" on both standardized English and Math tests. This is an incredibly high bar to meet annually. This year, our school did not meet this goal, and neither did any other school in Vermont, a state whose schools rank highly when compared against the highest performing countries in the world.

We are committed to continuous school improvement, and to supporting all of our students in their effort to succeed. This is what we strive to achieve every day. But we don't believe that NCLB effectively measures the quality of our school—what our students know, or what our school and district are doing to support their learning and development. This stance regarding NCLB as a model for measuring school quality is something that the Vermont Agency of Education is also vocal about. You may read a letter from Vermont's Secretary of Education that explains their stance at <http://education.vermont.gov/.../edu-memo-holcombe-regarding-...>

While we reject NCLB labeling of all Vermont schools as "low-performing", we are continuously working to improve the quality of our programs and student supports. This year, we will continue to partner with our District and the

Agency of Education to implement a continuous improvement plan for our school that will support the needs of all of our school's students. We will be reviewing all of our programs as a part of a more comprehensive review of our school's academic experiences and student supports. As we identify opportunities for parent and family participation in the development and implementation of our improvement plans, we'll let you know. We hope that you will continue to support our school in these efforts, and we value your involvement.

Sincerely,
Cathy Newton
OQS Principal