

## **Questions and Answers for Parents of Students taking TerraNova**

### **How do I know how my child did on the tests?**

*The information received from a norm-referenced test, such as the TerraNova, provides schools with data that helps determine somewhat if groups of students are making progress toward nationally recognized content standards and common core state standards. With information collected in the classroom during the course of the year, along with the results from TerraNova, we begin to get a clearer view of our alignment to national standards and instructional practices.*

### **What do the scores tell me about my child?**

*When you receive your child's results from the TerraNova tests on the Home Report, you are seeing a National Percentile Score that represents the percent of students in the nation your child did better than. Keep in mind however, that these tests sample our curriculum and that a more comprehensive view of your child's academic progress is evidenced by all the data we collect during the school year.*

### **How did the school do on the test?**

*The package of reports presented to the board of education indicated that our students have historically performed above the national average, and this year's group of students maintained that record of high performance.*

### **How does my child's school compare with others in the area?**

*Data is not collected for the purpose of comparing schools using one test. These tests are designed to sample the curriculum and help teachers add information from this test to all the information they have available about students to plan lessons and make adjustments to curriculum when necessary. This is not a test that should be used for schools to compete with or compare to.*

### **What do the scores tell the school?**

*To a certain extent, the TerraNova Tests are external evaluations of how our school is doing by measuring commonly accepted academic content standards and common core state standards. There are several "points of view" that may be taken from the data: One might be to compare ourselves to a national average to answer the question: Are we average, about average, or above average as a grade group in the content measured by the test? Another might be to compare this year's group of students to those from last year, and the year before that in order get a trend line.*

### **What does the school do with this information?**

*The value of a test such as TerraNova lies in the fact that it is a standardized test and from this we can develop trend data over the years. Using trend data provides for making adjustments of curriculum emphasis if and where necessary.*

### **How is a standardized achievement test different from classroom (teacher-developed) tests?**

*Standardized achievement tests are different from teacher-developed tests because of the extensive test development and standardized process. Knowing how a standardized test is developed can clarify its characteristics, values, and limits. There are four main stages: planning the test, writing the test items, trying out the items and selecting the ones to include in the final test, and norming the final test.*

*The first two stages-planning the test and writing the test items-include the combined efforts of test experts, teachers, and curriculum specialists. The test content is defined so that it reflects the skills and concepts that are common to the most curricula throughout the country. Then items are developed to measure the specified content. In the third stage, items are tried out to see how they work in the classroom. The statistical characteristics of the test items from this tryout are analyzed to ensure the items are appropriate for the intended grades. The best items are then selected to be included in the final test. In the fourth stage, the final test is normed, i.e., a sample of students who represent the characteristics of the national school population take the test under controlled conditions. Then, when a student takes the standardized test in the classroom, the results can be compared with scores of students in the national sample.*

### **Why should my child take a standardized achievement test?**

*Standardized tests give objective information about a student's progress. Comparing students with a norm group (national sample) provides a common frame of reference for assessing their abilities. The tests give information that can be used to identify a student's strengths and instructional needs. This information can also be used for instructional planning, and program evaluation. When achievement test batteries are administered over extended periods of time, a long-range picture of the student's progress can be seen. Standardized tests are compared from one testing to the next.*

*When achievement test batteries are administered over extended periods of time, a long-range picture of the student's progress can be seen. Standardized tests are better suited for this than other types of tests because the measurements can be compared from one testing to the next.*

*Standardized tests may also help in vocational and educational planning because students can compare themselves with students beyond their own school environment. Standardized test*

*results may help high school students make decisions about what courses to take, what curriculum to pursue, and what type of schooling or occupation to enter when they leave school.*

**As a concerned parent/guardian, what else should I know about test scores?**

*Results of standardized testing provide teachers and school administrators with valuable information. Test scores on a standardized achievement test are an objective estimate of a student's achievement in certain areas. They provide one important source of information for assessing the student's progress. A teacher's judgment of the student's strengths and needs, however, is based on many kinds of information, not just standardized test scores. For instance, the teacher also considers classroom tests and quizzes, evaluation of homework and classroom exercises, records of assignments completed, and observation of the student's work and study habits.*

*Test scores describe performance on one particular test at one particular time. From these descriptions, inferences are made about a student's abilities. Even though standard testing conditions are maintained, there may be reasons the test performance is not typical of the student's usual performance. For reasons apart from the test itself, some measurement error is probably associated with any test score. A statistical procedure takes this into account by calculating the range that is likely to include the student's test score. Test scores, therefore, should not be regarded as absolute values, but as approximations or general indications of the student's level of achievement. If the test covers some areas that the student has not yet studied, low scores in those areas would not be a sign of poor school achievement.*