

Montana Office of Public Instruction
Summary of Comparisons Involving Smarter Interim Results (SY 2018 – 2019)

Robin Clausen, PhD

GEMS Stakeholder Liaison and Research Analyst

The Smarter Balanced Assessments (Smarter) are a component of the Montana Comprehensive Assessment System (MontCAS). Participation on the Summative end of year assessment is required; however, the Interim Assessments are voluntary. Districts have the option to participate in a variety of interim assessments including the Smarter math and English Language Arts (ELA) grades 3–8 and high school interim assessment blocks (IABs) and interim comprehensive assessments (ICAs). Many of the districts who participated in the Interim Assessments in 2018 also participated in 2019. Students that take the Smarter Interim Assessments show strong gains from their Interim to their Summative scores and achieve higher scores, on average, on the Summative assessment in comparison to their non-participating peers.

This report provides a summary of the two areas of analysis conducted regarding the use of Smarter Interim Assessments. The first analysis examines whether Interim test takers show growth on the Summative in comparison to their Interim scores. There are many possible reasons for growth including student and teacher familiarity with the assessment platform, teacher and student familiarity with grade-level content, teacher familiarity with grade-level standards, as well as data-driven instruction. The second analysis examines the degree to which Interim test takers score higher on the Summative Assessment compared to their non-participating peers. These findings are important to share with Montana schools since Interim Assessments are optional for all accredited schools. Of note, some important demographic differences exist between those who did and did not take an Interim Assessment. For example, the proxy for economically disadvantaged (free and reduced lunch) student group had higher percentages of Interim test takers than in the non-testing comparison group and higher numbers of American Indian students took the Interim Assessments.

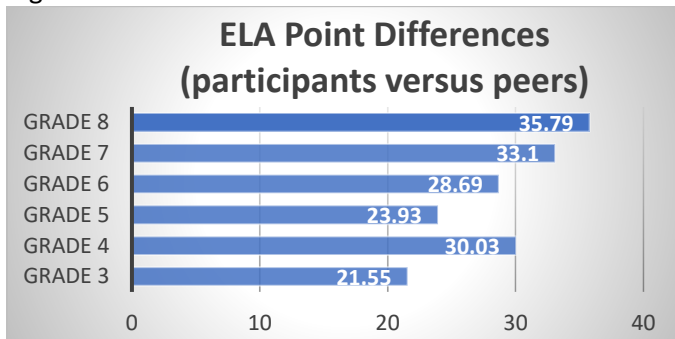


Figure 1 Bar chart showing ELA point differences between interim participants versus non-participants

The most significant impact of the Interim Assessments is observable in students who took the ELA IABs. Student scores significantly rose from the Interim score to the Summative score. Moreover, students who took at least one Interim Assessment significantly outperformed on the Summative Assessment students that did not take Interim Assessments for all tested grades. In this ELA figure, we see that at all grade levels, students who took ELA IAB is higher on the Summative Assessment than those who did not. In most cases, the difference is half an achievement level. Similar performance can be seen for students who took math IAB. Average differences between Interim math test takers and the comparison group range from 21.40–39.68 point difference in the scale score (all significant).

The Interim Assessments are both a measure and a treatment — students who took Interim Assessments outperformed their non-participating peers on nearly every measure, as well as showing individual student growth from the Interims to the Summative. Differences between the comparison group and Interim test takers were nearly half a achievement level. Progress made in both ELA and math continue to demonstrate the instructional effectiveness of embedding the Interim Assessments into the curriculum.