1. **What is the OECD Test for Schools?**

The OECD Test for Schools is an online assessment available to high schools and districts. The test is based on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a well-established international exam administered in more than 70 countries and education systems. The OECD Test for Schools uses complex test questions similar to the PISA and is scored on the same scale. Schools administer this test to a random sample of 15-year-old students to assess how well the school is preparing them in math, science, and reading compared to their peers in schools in the United States and other countries. Additionally, the test questions are designed to simultaneously assess problem solving and critical thinking. The test also includes a unique student survey questionnaire that gathers data about student attitudes and school culture. This results in a unique and valuable report that lets school leaders see whether they are preparing their students for college and careers in a global marketplace.
2. **Who developed the test and why?**

   The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed this assessment with support from a number of US organizations and philanthropic foundations. The OECD Test for Schools was administered in the United States for the first time in a pilot paper-based test in 2012.

   The mission of the OECD is to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. The OECD launched PISA to give countries regular and reliable data on the knowledge and skills of their students and the performance of their education systems. The OECD Test for Schools, based on PISA, expands this reach and allows schools in the United States to compare their performance to other schools worldwide. Northwest Evaluation Association™ (NWEA™) has partnered with OECD to be the US Test Service Provider of the OECD Test for Schools, which is now available online.

3. **How is the OECD Test for Schools different from PISA?**

   PISA is a triennial international survey that evaluates education systems worldwide. As interest in that assessment has grown, educators want to know how their individual schools compare with students and schools in education systems worldwide. To address this need, the OECD developed the OECD Test for Schools. Whereas PISA assesses educational systems as a whole, the OECD Test for Schools assesses individual schools using the PISA scale. You can learn more about PISA [here](#).

4. **Why should schools sign up for another test?**

   With a minimal investment of time and resources—a random sample of only 85 students per school and just three hours of administration time—the assessment provides schools with a previously unavailable international benchmark; telling school leaders whether their high school students are prepared for the twenty-first century workforce; measuring skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving, not currently assessed by many current tests; and yielding detailed assessment data and insights that schools and districts can use to make ongoing strategic improvements.

5. **Will this test be used for accountability purposes?**

   No. This is a voluntary, no-stakes test that provides schools and educators with actionable information to improve teaching and learning at their school. It is a learning tool to inform—not a test to evaluate educators or grade students.
6. Are individual student results available?

No. The sample design provides insight on school-wide performance so that educators can better understand how well their school is preparing students for twenty-first century success and make any needed improvements.

7. What subjects does the test cover?

The test assesses mathematics, reading, and science in a new way, by assessing each of these subject areas via items that require critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

8. What does the student survey portion of the test include?

The student survey portion of the test asks about students’ home backgrounds, assesses how students feel about their learning environment, and probes the degree to which they feel engaged in and motivated by their coursework and connected to their teachers. Many of the school leaders involved in the original pilot administration of this test indicated that the survey data yielded critical information about areas that needed improvement—information they had no other way of obtaining. The school leaders also communicated that in many instances they hadn’t been aware of problems, particularly around teacher-student engagement issues, student confidence, and the ability of young people to see how core content areas connect to the real world.

9. Will the results be public?

While schools are openly invited to share their results publicly, this is not required. Test results will never be shared without permission from the school. The results belong to each school.

For example, the Fairfax County, Virginia school district chose to have ten of its high schools take the pilot test in 2012 and published all of the results as part of a commitment to collective learning. Many other districts and schools chose only to share results with district leadership, teachers, and parents. The decision is entirely up to each school.
10. How many US schools have taken the test so far?

More than 400 US schools have participated in the administration of the OECD Test for Schools since the 2012 pilot. Many of the school leaders involved have indicated that the assessment was a worthwhile investment because it provided useful information about how well they were preparing their students for success in the global economy. Schools who have taken the test are making numerous changes based on the insights they gained from the assessment data. Examples of these changes include adjustments to course sequencing, requirements and reading lists, and professional development programs for teachers and staff.

11. When can the assessment be administered? How much flexibility do schools have on the timing?

Schools can sign up and have students take the assessment at any time. Testing of the sample group of students must take place within a two-week test window selected by the individual school.

12. How many students per school must take the test?

Only 85 students per school need to take the test. Schools will submit a complete list of eligible 15-year-old students; a stratified random sampling process by gender and grade will be run to select 85 students to take the test.

Smaller schools can participate if they have at least 45 eligible students for their sample. In all cases, at least 80% of the selected students must test within the test window in order to receive a school report.

If you are interested in participating in the test and your school has less than 45 eligible students, please contact your NWEA Partner Accounts representative.

13. How long does the test take to administer?

It takes just over three hours to administer the assessment, including the survey and time for breaks. School or district staff will administer the test. NWEA will provide quality monitors to some schools to ensure consistent processes are being followed.
14. How can the performance of a school be measured when testing only 85 students in three hours? This is a major contrast to many other tests (such as summative assessments), which take many more hours and require all students to take the test.

The innovative test design and sampling procedure make it possible to implement this high-value, yet low-stakes, assessment in a reasonable amount of testing time.

In a typical summative test, a proficiency classification is made for each student, and aggregation is done only across items for each student. For the OECD Test for Schools, on the other hand, the data are aggregated across both items and students to measure school performance; thus the school is a unit of analysis. Therefore, fewer students need to take the test in order to produce valid data for the school.

Testing time varies for different assessments and their purposes. The OECD Test for Schools is designed to support international benchmarking and school improvement programs; provide descriptive information and analysis on the skills and creative application of knowledge in reading, mathematics, and science; and provide information on how different factors within and outside the school associate with student performance. To achieve these goals, the OECD Test for Schools contains a cognitive test with items sampled from each of the reading, math, and science content domains, as well as contextual questionnaires. The cognitive test uses seven fixed forms (booklets) and a balanced incomplete block design, and students are randomly assigned to one of the seven forms. Test items on each form were selected to represent the set of knowledge and skills needing to be assessed. Such test design ensures the content is representative of this assessment. Additionally, the statistical tools used to analyze the test items allow NWEA researchers to draw valid inferences about students’ knowledge and skills being assessed through three hours of testing.

15. What happens after the test?

Once a school has met all the testing-completed criteria, NWEA will analyze the assessment results and produce a detailed school-level report. The detailed report—over 100 pages—will include in-depth performance results, survey insights, and school comparisons, as well as strategies from across the country and around the world that a school can use to address areas of weakness. The report will be produced and available to schools within eight weeks.

16. Is software required?

All a school needs is internet access and a web browser. The test works in Chrome, Firefox, and Safari.
17. Is there support to help schools understand and apply the test results?

Once schools receive their OECD Test for Schools report, they can take advantage of a complimentary one-hour virtual consultation as an introduction and overview of the report.

For those schools and districts that want to dig deeper into their reports to develop or enhance their continuous improvement plan, NWEA also offers onsite OECD Test for Schools data coaching services.

18. How can my school sign up to take the test?

Contact your NWEA Partner Accounts representative or visit OECDSchoolTest.NWEA.org to get in touch with NWEA and learn how your school can benefit from the OECD Test for Schools. As the official US Test Service Provider, NWEA will provide complete support to help you sign up, administer the test, and receive your report.