

SDUHSD Assessment & Accountability Update

History & Context:

In the early 1990's the state of California developed content standards for each of the four core academic subject areas (English/Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, & Social Studies) that outlined what students were to learn at each grade level. Subsequently the state developed annual standardized tests intended to measure individual and collective student achievement relative to these standards – these are known as the California Standards Tests (CST) and have been the primary tool by which student achievement has been measured in California and the primary means by which schools and districts have been held accountable over the last two decades.

The CST's were part of California's overarching testing and accountability system called Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) which included:

- California Standards Tests (CST) for ELA, Math, Social Studies, and Science
- California Modified Assessment (CMA)/California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA), both intended to measure mastery of California ELA & Math standards for students with significant disabilities
- Standards-based Tests in Spanish (STS) intended to measure mastery of California ELA & Math standards for English Learners in the U.S. for 12 months or less
- California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) for ELA & Math

All of these tests were aligned with and intended to measure student achievement of the California Content Standards and fulfilled all federal accountability requirements. All of these measures were included in the development of an Academic Performance Index (API) for each school – a single score intended to be a holistic measure and indicator of school-wide academic achievement.

Since authorization of the federal "No Child Left Behind Act" (NCLB) in 2001, all states have been required to develop a system of accountability for student achievement that includes content standards and annual achievement testing – each state has developed its own standards, tests, and system of accountability in accordance with NCLB requirements.

The Development of the Common Core State Standards:

In the spring of 2009 the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State Schools Officers met to discuss the possibility of states voluntarily collaborating to develop a set of common standards and assessments. At that time 48 states agreed to work toward this goal and the result was the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA & Math. These standards are benchmarked to the academic standards of the highest achieving nations in the world and reflect research on the skills and knowledge students need to be successful and competitive in the universities and careers of the 21st century, placing greater emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving, literacy, and application of skills and knowledge. As these standards were developed, new assessments tied to these standards were created simultaneously. California has adopted the CCSS as our state's official standards for ELA & Math and has adopted the new Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessments to measure student growth and achievement relative to these new standards. These new assessments will be officially administered to all students and schools will be held accountable for achievement on them for the first time in the spring of 2015.

As you've likely seen in recent news reports, both the California Assembly and Senate passed Assembly Bill 484 on September 11, 2013 and Governor Brown has publicly stated his intent to sign the legislation into law. AB 484 revamps California's student assessment and school accountability system in light of the new Common Core Standards and related assessments. What follows is a summary of some of the key parts of this new legislation, what it means for our schools and students, as well as what questions remain.

Key Implications of the New Legislation:

With California's adoption of the Common Core standards and the selection of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessments to measure achievement of the CCSS, AB 484 was initiated. The new legislation renames the state assessment and accountability system as Measurement of Academic Performance and Progress (MAPP). The legislation is wide-ranging and there are a number of questions yet to be answered, particularly in relation to Federal "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) requirements, but the key provisions are as follows.

Academic Performance Index (API): The API is suspended for the 2013-14 & 2014-15 school years and during this time would be reformulated to include the new MAPP assessments and to include yet to be determined measures of school quality other than test scores.

CST/CMA: CST's and CMA's for all subject areas and for all grade levels are eliminated effective immediately.

CAPA: The CAPA will continue to be used for students with significant disabilities in ELA & Math in grades 3-11 and science in grades 5, 8, & 10.

Science Tests: NCLB requires assessment of science performance at certain intervals so California will continue to use the existing NCLB Science tests at grades 5, 8, & 10 until new assessments aligned to the

recently adopted Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) are developed. A timeframe for the development and implementation of these new NGSS assessments is yet to be determined.

2013-14 MAPP Tests: The new legislation calls for statewide participation in 2013-14 field testing of the new computer-based MAPP assessments (created by SBAC) in grades 3-8 & 11 in ELA and Math. For 2013-14 these tests would be given as part of the SBAC field tests and at this point the field tests are not expected to yield scores for individual students, schools, or districts and therefore the MAPP tests will not be used for any accountability or reporting purposes. Given that AB 484 has not been signed into law yet and still requires subsequent administrative guidance from the California Department of Education, many questions remain about exactly when, how, and to what extent schools will be expected to implement the 2013-14 MAPP field test.

Early Assessment Program (EAP): The EAP program is intended to be a way for high school juniors to measure their readiness for college-level English and math, parts of which were built into the STAR tests. Under the new legislation, for 2013-14 the existing EAP assessments will continue to be offered to schools and students on a voluntary basis and at no cost. After 2013-14 parts of the EAP will be built in to the MAPP assessment and will continue to be voluntary.

2014-15 MAPP Tests: In the spring of 2015 MAPP tests will be administered formally for ELA & Math for all students in grades 3-8, & 11. Results will be provided for individual students, schools, and districts and results will be used for state and federal accountability and reporting purposes.

Some parts of California's new MAPP plan appear to conflict with federal NCLB requirements and these conflicts will need to be resolved through negotiations between state and federal education agencies. California's State Superintendent of Public Instruction has already announced the state's intent to apply for a one year waiver from NCLB requirements to accommodate the state's plan. We expect this to be resolved shortly.

What Do These Changes Mean for SDUHSD?

As a district we are excited about the shift to the Common Core Standards and the associated assessments. Most importantly, we believe that the learning objectives outlined in the CCSS more closely reflect what we regard as the most important educational outcomes for our students - a significant departure from the rote knowledge emphasized in the old California Content Standards. We believe the new MAPP assessments tied to the CCSS represent a vast improvement over the CST's because the MAPP assessments, while likely not perfect, do measure student learning through multiple modes (writing, critical thinking, application of knowledge and skills, etc.) rather than purely through multiple choice tests which emphasize recall of information as with the CST's. We also see great benefit in many states utilizing the same high academic standards for students – not only does this allow for collaboration among educators across state lines, it also creates opportunities for fiscal efficiencies of scale.

The immediate elimination of CST's also alleviates the quandary California schools faced in 2013-14. Given that California Content Standards and the Common Core Standards represent two very different visions of what students should know and be able to do, we faced the difficult situation of trying to transition to the CCSS for which we will be held accountable in 2014-15 while simultaneously trying to prepare students for the CST's at the end of the current school year. The elimination of the CST's for 2013-14 removes the inherent tension between the two sets of standards and accountability systems and allows our teachers to focus on shifting curriculum, assessments, and instructional practices to align with the CCSS and the associated assessments.

Where Do We Go From Here?

We will continue to provide ongoing professional development for all of our teachers to ensure that they are grounded in the new standards and assessments as well as the curricular and instructional shifts that these standards and assessments require. We are working actively with the five districts that send students to us to ensure curricular alignment and a smooth academic transition for students as they move from one district to another. We are researching instructional materials aligned to the CCSS as well as developing our own materials in-house and will, through a public process, adopt CCSS-aligned textbooks when and where appropriate. We will continue to offer the rigorous college-preparatory, honors, and Advanced Placement curriculum for which our district is known as well as provide support and remediation services for students who demonstrate difficulty with achieving grade level learning expectations. We will continue to monitor developments at the local, state, and federal levels and will communicate regularly with our families and community as we make this important transition to a new set of academic standards that we believe will help us better prepare our students for post-secondary success regardless of what path they pursue after high school graduation. Thank you for your ongoing support of our students and our schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Grove", is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Michael Grove, Ed.D.
Associate Superintendent of Educational Services