Building on a Solid Foundation for the Future in the Newport-Mesa Unified School District

The first year’s results of the new statewide testing system are in and we are encouraged. We also recognize that there’s a great deal more to be done.

California has developed an ambitious plan to give students the essential 21st Century skills and knowledge they will need to succeed in the future. The new California State Standards are a dramatic shift towards more rigorous critical thinking. Students must regularly read complex non-fiction and write arguments that include claims, evidence, and reasoning. There is an increased emphasis on problem solving and analytical writing. These are the skills and capabilities that will enable students to thrive in postsecondary education and future careers.

The new California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) is helping us redefine what we want students to know and be able to do. CAASPP includes the Smarter Balanced Assessments Consortium (SBAC) results, which serve to measure a student’s mastery of these new skills. Newport-Mesa Unified School District (N-MUSD) completed the first administration of this new assessment last spring.

Additional information about the test:

- 2015 CAASPP results provide baseline assessments of English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics for grade 3 through 8 and 11.
- CAASPP results cannot be compared with previous STAR tests, because they are substantially different from their predecessors.
- Students’ CAASPP scores fall into one of four achievement levels: standard exceeded, standard met, standard nearly met, and standard not met.

The first CASPP test results were released yesterday by the California Department of Education (CDE). They show that a much higher proportion of N-MUSD students met or exceeded the State average for the California State Standards in both English language arts and mathematics. This is good news and reinforces what we already know -- that N-MUSD is offering a top-notch, high-quality learning experience for its students.
At every grade level, the percentage of elementary students who met or exceeded standards in ELA and math surpassed those percentages at the county and state level. When factoring in the percentage of students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, English language learners, and foster youth in our schools, we are also the most diverse and highest performing school district in Orange County.

The CDE also released results for the California Standards Test in Science, which is administered to students in grades five, eight and ten. These results, however, may not accurately represent student mastery of California’s recently adopted Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Simply put, Newport-Mesa has moved towards new science standards, while the state continues to administer tests based on the old standards.

In all, 13,480 N-MUSD students took tests in ELA, mathematics and/or science. Less than 1% of students did not take the assessment because of parental exemption. This reflects the strong support from our community.

The 2015 CAASPP results provide us with new baseline data against which we can measure our progress. We are confident that as students, teachers, and staff have more experience with the new curriculum and assessments, our students will demonstrate continuous improvement. SBAC results provide us with a solid foundation to continue preparing students for success in college and career. To this end, N-MUSD has aligned its local priorities and adopted new standards, curriculum, and assessment methods. Our Signature Academies are a major step in the direction of coordinating and delivering a world class curriculum. As a school community, we will continue to strengthen programs and meet the needs of every student.

The entire Newport-Mesa community can be exceedingly proud of the overall strides we are making to build a solid foundation for the future. The 2015 CAASPP/SBAC results have proven that the instructional program led by quality teachers and principals is well equipped to handle this new era of standards and assessments. I know that our diligent and dedicated teachers and administrators will use these new baseline results as a diagnostic tool to set a course for the future that will ensure the best possible outcome for “Every Child...Every Day.”

For additional information please access our district web site at:

http://nmusd.ca.admin.schoolloop.com/SBAC

Parents will receive individual student scores no later than mid-October.

Thank you for your continued support of the Newport-Mesa Unified School District.