

September 9, 2015

Shortly before school ended for the year, your child took part in the 2015 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), the new computer-based tests for English language arts/literacy and mathematics that replaced the former paper-based tests for these subjects.

These new exams are part of California's comprehensive plan for supporting high-quality learning and are based on California's new, more challenging academic standards.

These tests include a wider variety of questions than the multiple-choice tests they replaced, requiring students to explain how they solve problems, think critically, and write analytically. These skills take time and effort to master, but our students will need them to succeed in the long run.

In Durham Unified School District, we see these tests as an academic checkup. Like class assignments and report cards, they are one gauge of student progress—one way to provide you and your child's teachers with information about your child's work toward the high goals we have set for students.

The student score report will be sent to your home and it shows your child's achievement on these new tests. Please take a few moments to review it. You'll notice that along with an overall score for each subject, there is also information about how your child performed in different skill areas associated with English language arts/literacy and mathematics.

To meet federal test requirements, California administered the California Standards Test (CST), the California Modified Assessment (CMA), and the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) for Science to all students in grades five, eight, and ten. If your child was administered a science test, the results appear on the back of the student score report. While new assessments based on the Next Generation Science Standards are being developed, the California Department of Education will continue to use the CST, CMA, and the CAPA for Science.

Our schools are still adjusting to these new standards and the tests that go with them. We know that many if not most students will need to make significant progress to reach the challenging new goals we have set. That's why no student or parent should be discouraged by test results. These test results will not be used to determine whether a student moves on to the next grade.

Like the new learning goals they were designed to measure, these new tests are much too different from the old exams to make any comparisons between old scores and new. That's why this year's scores are better thought of as a starting point—a baseline for the progress we expect students to make over time.

These results are also being provided to your child's school. They will use them to help set learning goals for students this year. If you have questions or concerns about your child's progress, please call the school office to arrange a conference with your child's teacher.

Sincerely,

Len Foreman  
Superintendent