

Frequently Asked Questions – Common Core State Standards

Tamalpais Union High School District

2014-2015

The following fact sheet is designed to provide parents and students information about the 2014 implementation of Common Core State Standards in the Tamalpais Union High School District.

Q: What are educational standards?

A: These are academic expectations for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level.

Q: What are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

A: The Common Core State Standards establish expectations for the knowledge and skills students need at each grade level in order to be prepared for college and career in the 21st century. More than 40 states voluntarily adopted these standards as a replacement to previous state standards and implementation began in 2014.

Q: Which grade levels and subject areas are impacted?

A: Kindergarten through grade 12 in math and English language arts. Also note, Common Core calls for literacy standards to span across other subject areas including history, science and technical subjects.

Q: What do the CCSS provide?

A: These standards provide academic expectations that are clear and consistent across states (as opposed to each state setting it's own standards). The standards are internationally benchmarked so teachers and students can compare their learning to students across the globe. These standards ask students to go deeper in their learning key concepts and promote critical thinking and problem solving skills, which are expectations of today's colleges, workforce training programs and employers.

Q: How were the CCSS developed?

A: These standards were developed by building on the best state standards in the United States, examining the expectations of other high-performing countries around the world, and carefully studying the research and literature available on what students need to know and be able to do to be successful in college, career, and life.

Q: How has TUHSD prepared our students and teachers for implementation of these standards?

A: TUHSD has been preparing for the implementation of CCSS for several years by providing targeted professional development and time for teachers to collaborate to align curriculum and instruction to these standards. Furthermore, TUHSD works collaboratively with middle

schools to ensure a smooth transition from 8th to 9th grade. Students will learn key outcomes in their regularly schedule classes.

Q: Where can I learn more about CCSS?

A: The Common Core State Standards website: www.corestandards.org, or contact your site principal.

The following fact sheet is designed to provide parents and students information about the 2015 implementation of Smarter Balanced Assessments in the Tamalpais Union High School District.

Q: What is Smarter Balanced?

A: The *Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium* (SBAC) is a state-led consortium working collaboratively to develop assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards. These assessments will replace the STAR (Standardized Testing and Reporting) tests and are required for all students in California public schools.

Q: Who takes the test? In which subject areas?

A: In high schools, all 11th graders will take the *Smarter Balanced* assessment in math and English language arts. Note: 10th graders will also take a Life Science test very similar to the previous STAR test, as outlined by California.

Q: When will this test be administered?

A: Tests occur annually in April-May. Each school site will communicate testing dates and timelines directly to families.

Q: How long will the test take?

A: The state of California mandates that the test be untimed, meaning students can take as long as they need. Each student will complete 2 days of testing and the tests will last approximately 4 hours each. This time is not all spent testing, but allows some time for computer set-up and breaks.

Q: What should parents and students know about the test questions?

A: These assessments are computer-based and adaptive, including a bank of test questions aligned to standards, and free-response performance tasks. The questions are more open-ended (as compared to STAR) and require students to explain how they arrived at their answers, support their responses with evidence and solve real world problems. The questions are designed to provide information for how well students know the content and skills outlined in the Common Core. [Click here to view an example of a question from SBAC compared to STAR for 6th grade ELA and mathematics.](#)

Q: What does an adaptive test do?

A: Each student takes the same assessment and the questions are customized to each student's response during the exam. The benefit to this type of test is that it very personalized to each individual student and provides more accurate information about what each student knows and can do.

Q: What is a performance task?

A: Performance tasks are multiple step problems or scenarios that require a student to think critically and apply understanding. Sample performance tasks can be viewed on the Smarter Balanced website: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/>

Q: What should my child do to prepare?

A: Because TUHSD has invested ample time over the past several years on the implementation of Common Core standards, all students should be adequately prepared in their English and math classes to take the Smarter Balanced assessments. TUHSD also encourages all students to eat a balance meal and come to school well rested on exam days. Sample questions and practice tests are available online to help students prepare, and are entirely optional. <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/practice-test/>

Q: What happens with the results?

A: Scores will be reported annually to students, teachers, counselors and parents. As was previously done with results from STAR, The results will EVENTUALLY be used to calculate API (academic performance index) and AYP (adequate yearly progress), however this practice has been suspended for the 2014-2015 school year by the State due to the recent implementation of Common Core Standards. Data will be analyzed for trends over time and each year's results considered as only one data point to monitor for continuous improvement process at the classroom, school and systems level(s). Scores will not impact college eligibility for individual students.

Q: Where can I learn more about the Smarter Balanced Assessment?

A: The Smarter Balanced website: www.smarterbalanced.org or contact your site principal.