



Bellflower Unified School District

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 16, 2015

CONTACT: Valerie Martinez, William Diepenbrock
909-445-1001

Bellflower Unified Ready for Challenge of New State Computerized Tests

BELLFLOWER – More than 7,000 Bellflower Unified students this spring are tackling challenging new state tests in math and English language arts (ELA) that will assess writing, critical thinking and problem-solving skills emphasized by the California Common Core Standards.

The computerized tests were developed by California and 21 other states working together as the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) to gauge instruction in the Common Core concepts, which were fully implemented by public schools this year.

California ran a statewide field test of the SBAC exams in 2014; this is the first year that scores will be reported to schools and parents.

“With these exams, we are asking our students to do a lot more than fill in bubbles in multiple choice tests,” Bellflower Unified Superintendent Dr. Brian Jacobs said. “We’re asking them to demonstrate their understanding, to show us how they arrive at their answers. The result will be a far deeper measure of the effectiveness of our teaching approaches.”

The ELA and math tests are the centerpiece of the new California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). The program, which includes science tests and alternative assessments for students with cognitive disabilities or learning difficulties, replaces the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) system in place between 1998 and 2013.

Students in grades three through eight and grade 11 will take the SBAC tests in English language arts and math. Each test has two parts: A section in which question difficulty is adjusted based on student answers and a section with performance tasks centered on a common theme or scenario. Performance tasks may include more than one right answer, and require students to show research, writing and reasoning skills.

MORE

Standard of Excellence - Nothing Less

Bellflower Unified School District provides a pathway for all students to attain the expertise and develop skills of academic excellence that will empower them to become lifelong active learners, demonstrate respect for themselves and others in a dynamic, diverse and global society, become responsible, informed, productive, independent and contributing citizens, and perform successfully in their chosen field and in society.



Bellflower Unified School District

“This is a very exciting time for us,” said James Fleming, Bellflower’s Director of Assessment, Accountability and Research. “Our teachers, students and staff have been preparing all year for the challenges of these tests.”

Bellflower Unified upgraded student technology and Internet connections, conducted teacher training, administered interim tests similar to the end-of-year exams as practice for students, prepared IT support in case of software issues and engaged in extensive logistical planning by site administrators, Fleming said.

Still, state education leaders have cautioned against comparing results on the SBAC tests to scores to the California Standards Tests administered to students in grades two through 11 under the STAR system. Teachers and students are still adapting to the test formats and the Common Core’s deeper emphasis on research, reasoning and writing skills.

Fleming said Bellflower Unified educators aren’t focused on achieving a number.

“Our driving curiosity is focused on how well our instruction in the different Common Core concepts is taking root,” Fleming said. “Teachers have been trying so many new approaches, they can’t wait to see what sticks and what they should adjust. I think everyone sees this as a multi-year process.”

State officials have said school districts will receive results about four weeks after testing. Districts will be able to aggregate results by school, grade level and student group.

Parents will receive a two-page report within eight weeks of testing. The report will give a student’s scores for ELA, math and science, the student’s achievement level and a comparison to average student scores on California’s 2014 field test of the exam. Eleventh-graders will receive data on readiness for college-level ELA and math courses.

MORE

Standard of Excellence - Nothing Less

Bellflower Unified School District provides a pathway for all students to attain the expertise and develop skills of academic excellence that will empower them to become lifelong active learners, demonstrate respect for themselves and others in a dynamic, diverse and global society, become responsible, informed, productive, independent and contributing citizens, and perform successfully in their chosen field and in society.



Bellflower Unified School District

Bellflower Unified State Testing Information Sheet

Tests

- **Smarter Balanced Assessment in English Language Arts:** Grades 3-8, 11
- **Smarter Balanced Assessment in Math:** Grades 3-8, 11
- **California Standards Test in Science:** Grades 5, 8 and 10
- **Alternative assessments:** Forty-six BUSD students with learning difficulties in grades 3-8 and 11 are expected to field test ELA and math exams between April 15 and June 10. Existing state alternative assessments will be provided in science for students with cognitive disabilities.

Dates for Grades 3-8

- **State window:** March 17-June 12
- **Bellflower:** April 20-May 12

Dates for Grade 11:

- **State window:** April 28-June 12
- **Bellflower:** May 12-June 12

Duration

- **ELA:** Computer adaptive section, 1 day; Performance Tasks, 2 days
- **Math:** Computer adaptive section, 1 day; Performance Tasks, 1 day
- **Flexibility:** Extra days built into schedule to handle glitches or student absences.
- **Participation:** Bellflower anticipates meeting the state's 95 percent participation rate goal.

Technology

- **Internet:** All schools provide wireless Internet at speeds in excess of recommended minimum of 100 megabits per second per student.
- **Tools:** Students will use Chromebook laptops with built-in trackpads for point-and-click needs.
- **Support:** All district computer techs are trained in SBAC software.

Staff training/Student preparation

- **District unit tests and districtwide assessments:** Updated in fall 2014 to reflect SBAC-style questions and longer-form answers in ELA to teach students to write on demand
- **SBAC interim assessments:** These use the same computer tools as the end-of-year tests. Majority of students will take at least one interim assessment before taking end-of-year tests.
- **Extra staff:** A host of additional instructors trained in the testing system are available to provide each teacher with extra help – as needed – in guiding students.
- **Site coordinators:** Assistant principals oversee complex testing schedules and other logistics at each school to ensure all students have adequate time for testing.

###

Standard of Excellence - Nothing Less

Bellflower Unified School District provides a pathway for all students to attain the expertise and develop skills of academic excellence that will empower them to become lifelong active learners, demonstrate respect for themselves and others in a dynamic, diverse and global society, become responsible, informed, productive, independent and contributing citizens, and perform successfully in their chosen field and in society.