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DISTRICT**

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Dear Parents/Guardians:

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As you may have heard, the California Department of Education (CDE) has ended the STAR (Standardized Testing and Reporting) program and has replaced it with CAASPP (California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress). STAR included the California Standards Tests (CSTs) as the primary assessment of student learning. From now on, CAASPP will use the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) online assessments. Smarter Balanced is aligned to the Common Core State Standards in literacy and mathematics and includes more rigorous content than the previous CSTs. Through CAASPP, districts will be able to gain valuable information and monitor student progress to ensure that all students master the new standards and are prepared for college and career opportunities beyond high school.

Last spring, many Fremont Unified students participated in the field test of the Smarter Balanced assessments. This allowed staff and students a valuable experience to prepare for the technology requirements and academic content of the new system. This year, the Smarter Balanced computer adaptive assessments will be required for all students in grades 3-8 and 11 in the areas of English language arts and Mathematics. There will also be a paper-based Science test required for students in grades 5, 8, and 10, which was a part of the previous STAR program. We expect that in the future, the Science tests will also be converted to a computer-based system aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

Between **May 4 and May 29, 2015**, FUSD students will take the new Smarter Balanced assessments. It is important that your child be present during his or her school's testing window. To learn about the types of questions on the computer-based Smarter Balanced assessments, you and your child can view the practice tests online at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/practicetest.asp>.

We anticipate that individual student reports will be sent home to families in August 2015, and will include an overall score and a description of the student's achievement level in English language arts, Mathematics and Science. It is important to note that these scores cannot be compared to scores that your child previously received on the CSTs in the STAR program tests because:

- Smarter Balanced is based on the new Common Core State Standards
- Smarter Balanced involves very different types of test questions at higher difficulty levels
- Smarter Balanced results will not be reported using the former STAR program categories
- This year is considered a baseline for the new assessment format and content.

Because the Smarter Balanced assessments are more demanding than the previous California Standard Tests (CSTs) and they are testing student knowledge and skills in different ways, we expect that overall proficiency scores for students, schools, districts, and the state will not be as high. In fact, states where early pilots of scoring have taken place have found that student scores on the Smarter Balanced assessments are much lower than on the previous state assessments. This does not mean that students are any less proficient than they used to be. It simply means that we are holding our students to a higher standard of learning. We expect that over time, the scores will increase as our students become more adept at the new learning challenges and technology skills needed to be successful.

If you would like more information, please visit the Parent/Student tab of the CDE CAASPP web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/>. You may also visit our website at [www.fremont.k12.ca.us](http://www.fremont.k12.ca.us) for updates. We are committed to keeping our parents informed about the new Common Core State Standards and the forthcoming Smarter Balanced assessments.

Sincerely,

Kim Wallace, Ed.D  
Assistant Superintendent of Instruction