

Superintendent Rick Schmitt's Monthly Update

September 2015

Superintendent Schmitt regularly updates the greater San Dieguito Union High School District community through our local media with a monthly update. Topics may include academics, facilities, budget, enrollment, safety, and other specific and special interest topics. Today's update focuses on various achievement measures and the 2016-17 High School Enrollment process.

2016-17 High School Selection

The annual San Dieguito Union High School District (SDUHSD) High School Selection process will take place this winter as it has in years past. High School Selection for the 2016-17 school year will take place between January 4 - February 1, 2016. All students currently in 8th grade will declare which high school they would like to attend in 2016-17 and any students currently in grades 9-11 who wish to change their current high school will also declare which school they'd like to attend for 2016-17. Current 9-11th graders who do not want to change schools, need not do anything and will remain enrolled at their current high school. As always, our goal is to enroll every student in their first choice school and we will do everything we can to accomplish this goal. If an enrollment lottery is necessary for any of our schools, the lottery would be held on February 11, 2016 with families notified within a week of that date. Further information and details will be found on the SDUHSD High School Selection website (click [here](#)) and will be publicized via the SDUHSD [Facebook](#) page.

Recent Achievement Results

Our goal in SDUHSD is to continue to provide high quality instruction that will prepare our students for academic success and college/career readiness. Progress toward this goal is evident in recent results on various achievement measures. In the 2014-2015 school year, SDUHSD students took a record 7,413 Advanced Placement (AP) exams with a district average pass rate of 84.6%, well above the State of California average pass rate of 64%. With approximately the same number of high school students in SDUHSD in 2015 as there were in 2004, SDUHSD has doubled the number of AP tests taken while increasing the pass rate from 62% to 84%. SDUHSD is one of the few districts where there are no barriers to accessing honors and AP courses. Most recent reports from the California Department of Education indicate that SDUHSD continues to improve SAT (83.08%, score of 1500 or greater) and ACT (89.92%, score of 21 or greater) scores that far exceed the state (SAT 46%, ACT 56%) averages.

We expect this trend of high achievement on standardized assessments to continue with the new Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBAC), which are designed to measure mastery of additional key skills identified during the creation of the new state standards, as well as to measure critical thinking and application of knowledge skills in both English Language Arts (ELA) and math. Critical thinking and college and career readiness skills have been a curricular focus in SDUHSD for decades, and are now included in the new assessments.

These tests are computer adaptive and 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. It is essential that our students master these skills in order to achieve success in high school, in college, and in the workplace.

The SBAC tests were administered for the first time in 2014-15, under the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). Results will be considered a baseline from which to measure future growth. Student scores on SBAC tests will NOT be comparable to prior years' California Standard Tests (CST) scores, as the CSTs assessed different skills. I am excited to report that our 2014-15 student baseline results once again showed a significant number of our students "meeting" or "exceeding" the expected standards in ELA and Math district wide and we far surpassed the state and county averages. For example, 79% of our 8th grade students who tested on the ELA test met or exceed the expected standard with the county average at 51%. In Math, 70% of our students met or exceeded the expected standard and the county average was 38%. Once again, this is a baseline year for all schools in the State of California and we look forward to making progress year over year so all of our students meet the expected standards for years to come.

We are currently awaiting the arrival of the SBAC score reports from the California Department of Education and will mail them once we receive them. The student score report will show individual student achievement on these new tests.

Another important note, during 2014-2015 testing, nearly all of our students in grades 7, 8 and 11 took the Smarter Balanced assessments unlike other districts throughout the country that struggled to have students fully participate in testing. We believe that our high participation rate is due to the fact that our families see the importance of preparing our students for College Entrance Exams. It is important to note that the Smarter Balanced assessments are aligned to the California State Standards as are the new SAT & ACT tests, and Advanced Placement (AP) exams, that most SDUHSD students eventually take. The new state standards and the related SBAC assessments help them prepare for these exams.

To promote measures of college and career readiness, each SDUHSD comprehensive high school asks for a donation in order to provide each 10-11th grade student the opportunity to take the PSAT and interested 9th graders may also sign up to participate. Any 9-11th grade student may sit for the PSAT during the school day on October 14, whether they donate or not. This opportunity gives 11th grade students who score within a given range the eligibility to apply for National Merit Scholarship Programs. In 2015 SDUHSD had 82 students qualified as National Merit Semifinalists. The new SAT suite of assessments, which includes the redesigned PSATs, are now all fully aligned to the new California State Standards as is the ACT Test. Results of these assessments are helpful for students and their families to consider while evaluating their student's college and career readiness skills.

As we raise expectations of knowledge and skills to be mastered by our students, SDUHSD teachers, counselors, and administrators strive to ensure that our students are prepared for the world in which they will learn, live and work in the future.

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