March 10, 2015

Dear SCUSD Families:

This month marks the start of testing season in California schools, opportunities for students to show what they know and for schools to identify learning needs. In addition to paper-and-pencil science tests, students in grades three through eight and eleven will take the online Smarter Balanced Assessments in math and English language arts.

These tests are tied to the new Common Core State Standards, which are learning goals for students at every grade. The Common Core challenges students to think independently, use technology, solve tough problems, analyze information and construct well-researched arguments.

We are working hard to give our teachers the support they need to help students master these new learning goals. The shift to seamless everyday classroom instruction in these standards, however, will take time. Scores from this year’s online test will likely reflect this challenging transition.

Also, results from the new tests should not be compared to results from the previous Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. The tests measure different things in different ways. Think of this year as California hitting the reset button. This year’s results will set a new starting point for student achievement against which we can compare performance for years to come. No student, parent or teacher should be discouraged by this year’s scores.

Your school will let you know when testing begins for your child. Please make sure your child gets a good night’s sleep before a test and eats a healthy breakfast. And remember, the primary purpose of testing is to support learning.

Thank you,

José L. Banda
Superintendent