



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
Board of Supervisors



Date: April 30, 2014

Board Meeting Date: May 20, 2014

Special Notice / Hearing: None

Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor Dave Pine

Subject: Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a Resolution supporting Common Core State Standards and the Smarter Balanced Assessments.

BACKGROUND:

California is transitioning to a new set of expectations for students and a new system for measuring student performance. The Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics are internationally benchmarked and focused on preparing students for the 21st century. The Smarter Balanced Assessments are an important tool for ensuring students are meeting the expectations set by the standards. It is hoped that these initiatives will strengthen the educational program provided to students, but successful implementation will require the sustained support and collaboration of the entire community.

Children Now, an advocacy organization for children, has asked the County to support the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the Smarter Balanced Assessments. To date Children Now has obtained statements of support from over 150 organizations in California including the California School Boards Association, Los Angeles and San Diego Unified school districts, Bay Area Council, Silicon Valley Leadership Group, The Education Trust-West, and Educators for Excellence.

DISCUSSION:

The new Common Core State Standards will benefit students by having fewer, clearer, and deeper standards and by requiring a greater use of analysis, critical thinking and real-world skills. They are internationally benchmarked and are aligned with the skills that all students need to thrive in a global economy that's increasingly competitive and

always evolving. As an example, rather than reciting facts from a reading passage, students are asked to show deeper understanding, such as examining the theme of the passage, using information from the text to explain their answer. Local school districts and teachers have been reviewing and updating how they teach the new standards to students over the last few years, and are engaged in exposing students to this new approach to learning.

The new Smarter Balanced Assessments are designed to help educators and parents know if students are progressing and understanding what they are supposed to be learning. These tests move away from a fill in the bubble format to a technology-based format. They provide a better measurement of the knowledge and skills students are acquiring through the use of short answer, longer responses and performance tasks, in addition to multiple choice questions. The assessments will also be adaptive, which means the difficulty of subsequent questions will be based on the response to the previous question. This allows the test to more accurately and efficiently reflect what students know. Currently school districts throughout California are “testing the test” in order to identify any implementation issues before the Smarter Balanced Assessments go live in the spring of 2015.

Students have a real opportunity to reach new levels of success during their K-12 education career as the Smarter Balanced Assessments are refined and the Common Core State Standards are fully implemented. It is important for policymakers, school district leaders, teachers, parents, business leaders and community members to understand and support the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the Smarter Balanced Assessments.

Approval of this Resolution contributes to the Shared Vision 2025 outcome of a Collaborative Community by supporting the San Mateo County Office of Education and the public school districts in the County in their efforts to implement the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None