

by Charles Miller  
***Superintendent, John Swett Schools***  
**Greetings Families and Community Members**

This month's article will focus on our current academic achievement results in the District. Our school District relies on a variety of sources to measure student progress. These include the results from the California Department of Education (CDE) Smarter Balanced assessments of math and English language arts. This is testing based on the Common Core State Standards. The tests form part of the state's California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, or CAASPP. Student scores are categorized in four achievement levels that indicate whether a student has exceeded, met, nearly met, or did not meet the standards in grades 3-8 and 11. The primary purpose of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) System is to assist teachers, administrators, students, and parents by promoting high-quality teaching and learning through the use of a variety of assessment approaches and item types. The CAASPP includes the Smarter Balanced assessment system for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics, the California Science Test (CAST), the California Alternate Assessments (CAAs) for ELA, mathematics, and science, and the optional

California Spanish Assessment (CSA). The purpose of the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments is to assess student knowledge and skills for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics, as well as how much students have improved since the previous year. These measures help identify and address gaps in knowledge or skills early so students get the support they need for success in higher grades and become ready for college or a career.

**We also rely on academic achievement results** on the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California, or ELPAC. The English Language Proficiency Assessments for California system is used to determine and monitor the progress of the English language proficiency of students whose primary language is not English. The ELPAC is aligned with the 2012 California English Language Development Standards and assesses four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The Initial ELPAC is administered to students in kindergarten through grade twelve who have a language other than English on the home language survey. The purpose of the Initial ELPAC is to identify students as being either an English learner or fluent English proficient. It is administered only once during a student's initial enrollment in a California public school. The Summative ELPAC is administered only to students who have previously been identified as an English learner based upon the results of the Initial ELPAC. The Summative ELPAC measures how well English learners are progressing toward English language proficiency.

**To help parents and educators identify strengths and areas for improvement,** California reports how districts, schools (including alternative schools serving high-risk students), and student groups are performing across state and local measures. This is where the CAASPP and the ELPAC come into play. For state measures, performance is based on two factors: Current year results, and whether results improved from the prior year. Performance on state measures, using comparable statewide data, is represented by one of five colors with red being the lowest level of performance and blue being the highest level of performance. State measures include chronic absenteeism, graduation rate, suspension rate, and academic (which includes performance in English language arts/literacy and mathematics). Future state measures will include performance on the California Science Test. Local measures are reported by school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools based on data available only at the local level. These measures include clean and

safe buildings, school climate, parent engagement, and access to a broad course of study. This information is not available for individual schools or student groups. Based on performance on state and local measures, schools and districts may be identified for support to improve student outcomes. You can see how we are doing by visiting [www.caschooldashboard.org](http://www.caschooldashboard.org).

The California School Dashboard uses color gauges to show student progress. Local educational agencies and schools receive one of five color-coded performance levels on the state indicators. From highest to lowest, the five performance levels are: Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, and Red. A careful analysis of the California School Dashboard indicators show steady growth for students in our District.

**In 2017, nearly all of our indicators (except for our graduation rate) were red or orange. Not good. In 2019, none of our indicators were red or orange.** Currently, our graduation rate, college and career indicators, and suspension rate are all Green! This is a significant improvement over the last three years. In addition, our English Learners are also making good progress. 51% of our English Learners are making progress towards English language proficiency on the ELPAC. This is higher than the State average.

Based on measurements performed by the Educational Opportunity Project through Stanford University, we also have data on our Learning Rates. Learning rates measure how much students' scores improve each year while they are in school. They are a better indicator of school quality than average test scores, which are influenced by a range of experiences outside of school. According to Stanford, our students learn 9% more each grade than the U.S. average. John Swett Unified provides higher than average educational opportunities while children are in school and Learning rates are 9% higher than districts with similar socioeconomic status. You can find our more by visiting <https://edopportunity.org>.

**As a result of our achievement gains, our District is no longer in need of Differentiated Assistance** from the Contra Costa County Office of Education. This is a significant shift for our District.

We will be discussing these topics in more detail at our next school Board meeting on January 15th at 6:30 p.m. at school offices in Rodeo. The public is always welcome to attend. As always, I am available by cell phone at 925-639-7408. Please feel free to reach out anytime.