



from the office of Superintendent Robert Collins



"The only thing that interferes with my learning is my education." Albert Einstein

"Just How Confident Are You That This Student Will Do His Best On The CST?"

Spring has arrived and once again we are faced with administering the California Standards Test (CST) from April 14th - 25th. Unfortunately, not all of our students take the test seriously and often our very best students either don't take the exam—opting to study for AP tests—or may miss school entirely because of the perception that these tests don't count. This year, we want to make a concerted effort to ensure that every one of our students takes the CST, and that they make a strong effort to do their very best. What do we need to do?

1. Next week, we will be announcing a **new student recognition program** based on student success on the CST. The recognition program will address 9th, 10th and 11th grade students and will establish a **Superintendent's Honor List** and a **Board of Trustee's Recognition** program. Student accomplishments will be recognized by letters and certificates of accomplishment along with other forms of recognition. We believe that these forms of recognition will have a significant impact on students' academic records and resumes for college and university applications.
2. We are asking all Advanced Placement and Honors teachers to take the time to discuss with their students the importance of the CST and **their expectation that their students will do only their very best.**
3. **Principals are requested to meet with their AP and Honors students** prior to the CST to express their expectations for student performance.

Our AP and Honors students have a significant impact on CST scores and consequently each school's API. **Let's make a concerted effort this year to ensure that this group of students does only their very best.**

California Standards Test and Expectations

We are all aware of the national debate regarding standardized testing. Arguments abound regarding the validity of such testing and whether it is reflective of quality teaching. Regardless, both the Federal and State Government place tremendous emphasis on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and California Standards Test. The high stakes include high school graduation for students, the determination of a school's Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and ranking on the Academic Performance Index (API).

However, the greatest impact of "test scores" may be the perception they create for the public in East County. The 2007 API indicates Grossmont Union High School District with a score of 704. At the same time, surrounding school districts that we are often compared to such as Poway and Escondido, have CST scores that are 60 to 100 points higher. "What conclusions might the public draw from these API scores and rankings?"

We have to accept the fact that **the public does pay attention to these scores and the rankings of schools** published in the media throughout the fall. Parents make decisions to send or not send their child to a school based on these scores, and communities often form opinions of their neighborhood school based on these test results.

While a student's performance on the CST is based on their learning over time, **there are things we can do as a school and as teachers to affect student performance on the CST.** I will provide staff with strategies that can have a big impact on student performance on the CST.

For example, and probably the most important thing we can do as teachers and administrators, is to ensure students know that every teacher and administrator has an **expectation that they will only give their very best effort on the CST.** We need to express these expectations on a regular basis. This is as important for our **Advanced Placement and Honors students** as it is for students who have not achieved at higher levels.

We need to remember that as teachers and administrators, **students truly listen to us and want to do their best.** **Strategy one** is for everyone **to continually express our expectations for student performance on the CST.**

RECOGNITION PROGRAM

Also, next week we will be announcing a **recognition program** that we believe will have an impact on students' perception of the CST. Teachers and administrators have stressed the importance of "making the CST important for students." We hope that a strong recognition program will be a start in that direction.

We will also provide additional information and strategies for addressing student performance on the CST. **I am asking every teacher and administrator to use these strategies in preparing students for the CST administration.** I sincerely believe that our students are better than a 704 API and that these achievement levels, in part, are the result of whether they take the CST seriously and actually do their very best. "Doing one's best" is an area that we should be able to influence in the weeks leading up to the CST administration.