



Plumas Lake Elementary School District Curriculum Update

February 11, 2015

New State Testing for State Standards

As many of you know, California adopted new standards in both English/Language Arts and in Mathematics. The content of what students are being asked to learn is almost exactly the same as the previous standards, but the depth to which students must show an understanding of these concepts has greatly increased.

So many of us complained that the old State testing (CST or STAR) and standards did not require or test a student's ability to problem solve, think deeply, or communicate. All the assessment did was ask students to choose answer A,B,C, or D. With a new set of standards and thinking comes a new test.

This year all of our 3rd through 8th graders will be taking the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). This test will be given to all of our students using Chromebooks or laptops. Many of our students have had the opportunity to use the Chromebooks on a regular basis.

The test will be a huge change for students. They will be asked questions in a variety of styles including open ended responses, multiple choice questions with multiple correct answers, and performance tasks. They will be taking the entire exam using a computer and will be expected to problem solve, explain their thinking, and to think more deeply about questions.

The test results will be reported to parents over the summer. Scores will be reported in 4 levels: 1=novice, 2=developing, 3=proficient, and 4=advanced.

Last year the test was given as a field test or a "test of the test." From the results of the field test the developers are predicting between 32 and 39% of students will be proficient or advanced in Math and 38-44% will be proficient or advanced in ELA depending on the grade level of students. This is far lower than previous STAR tests. In 2013, approximately 70% of our students were proficient or advanced in both subject areas.

The biggest reason for this prediction is the higher level of rigor required on the new test. PLESD is confident in the course of action that we have taken to meet these new standards and rigor. We understand that bringing about such a substantial change in our teaching and student expectations will take time and that our first year results will be lower.

We believe that the new standards and expectations will be great in the long run for our students but also understand there will be some growing pains.

PLESD Reaches Technology Goal for Students

PLESD is excited to announce that we have reached our 2:1 goal in just over a year. As many of you already know, PLESD has for the last year focused on providing our students increased opportunities to use technology in our classrooms. We launched an initiative to provide one device for every two students in the District. At the same time, PLESD had to bolster our technology infrastructure.

This January we added our 600th device for our 1,200 student District. Students are using the wireless devices at least once a week, while many are using them on a daily basis. The program was launched with teachers being chosen to be "Innovators." These teachers were given the first devices, were asked to problem solve rollout issues, begin to use the technology at least 3 times a week in an innovative fashion, and to find more staff members who would be interested in the next wave of devices. Teachers attended trainings provided by the District and/or regional trainings, and then began training their colleagues.

This year a second wave of Innovators was chosen. Additional devices were purchased and distributed. More students have access to technology, lessons are being developed that use technology to help students problem solve, think deeply, and communicate their ideas.

Riverside Meadows adds Spanish and Art Enrichment

Riverside Meadows is offering Conversational Spanish and Art as enrichment classes this year. Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth grade students have the opportunity to participate as part of the enrichment wheel for each of the grade levels.

The PLESD School Board decided to add these two courses because of the importance of providing our students a well rounded education. These two classes along with band and a writing enrichment are part of the enrichment opportunities for our students.

The District has started planning for an after school enrichment program for the elementary school to begin next year.

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