

Dear BUSD Families:

April 15, 2013

Your child, along with other public school students throughout California, will take part in the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program this spring. Students in grades two through eleven will take the California Standards Tests (CSTs). These tests measure how well students are achieving California's content standards for all subjects tested.

The 2013 STAR Program testing dates for our school district are April 22-29 for High School, and May 6-13 for Elementary and Middle School. There will be make-ups for those students absent from school, April 30 – May 3 for High School, and May 14-17 for Elementary and Middle School. (Please refer to the school calendar for specific testing dates by school.)

Helping your child achieve on the STAR tests

Families play a very important part in their children's education. Encouraging children to do their best in school and to complete school assignments well and on time can have a positive impact on children's learning. Research about how children learn shows that a great deal can be done at home to increase their academic performance.

One question you may have about the STAR Program is, "How can I help my child do better on the tests?" The question really is, "How can I help my child do well in school?" What you do at home can make a very big difference in how well your children achieve in school.

Here are some suggestions for helping your children in reading, writing, mathematics, and other academic areas:

Reading and Writing

- Listen to your children read. Read stories aloud to and with them.
- Talk about what you and your children are reading. Ask questions and discuss words that are new or difficult.
- Spend time together as a family, reading newspapers, magazines, and books.
- Encourage your children to write lists, notes, thank-you notes, requests, journals, recipes, short stories, and other types of writing used in everyday life.

Mathematics

- Review homework every day with your children to make sure assignments are completed. Ask your children to explain some of their math problems and how they solved them.
- Have your children help solve "real" mathematical problems as you play games, cook a meal, or prepare to do a home project.
- Show your children how mathematics is used in everyday life, including cooking, shopping, making crafts, sewing, and doing home repairs.
- Help your children read charts or graphs in newspapers and magazines. Read maps when going on a family trip. It is important to help your children apply what they are learning.

For Other Academic Areas

For other academic areas, such as science and history or social science, challenge children to use reading, writing, and mathematics skills along with their knowledge about the subject. As your children read about a subject, ask them to tell you about it. This reinforces what they have learned and promotes the use of their new vocabulary.

You Can Help Your Children Do Better on State Tests

- Discuss with your children the importance of going to school every day and doing their best on assignments and tests.
- Make sure your children have a quiet place to study and that they complete all homework assignments.
- Attend information meetings for parents and guardians. Ask about the major tests given to children and other ways academic achievement is measured.
- Discuss upcoming tests with your children and try to reduce their anxieties about test taking. Reassure them that the test results will provide useful information about what they know and what they still need to learn.
- Make sure your children attend school on testing days, get a good night's rest, and have breakfast before a big test.

Get Involved

Children do better in school when adult family members get involved. You can become involved by attending school events, joining family groups, and visiting your school's Web site. You also are encouraged to contact the school for additional information about your children's academic progress and the tests they are taking at school.

To Find Out More

Additional information on the STAR Program is available on the California Department of Education STAR Program Resources Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/resources.asp>

STAR results will be sent to your home address in a STAR Student Report at the beginning of the school year 2013-2014. Individual results are confidential and will be shared only with parents or guardians and their child's teacher(s). Please keep these reports for use when talking with your child's teacher(s) about ways to support your child's learning.

If you have further questions, please contact your child's teacher(s) or the school Principal.

Sincerely,



Neil Smith, Co-Superintendent