



**GOLETA UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
*Instructional Services*

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Dear Parents,

As report card time approaches, a few clarifications may be warranted. In your parent/teacher conference, you may hear a number of acronyms. Indeed, Smarter Balanced, DIBELS, STAR, otherwise known as assessments can be confusing. Assessment systems can sound like alphabet soup for those not familiar with the variety of evaluations administered. Students are evaluated on an on-going process in Goleta Union School District (GUSD) and different assessments serve different purposes. Just as California requires the state tests (Smarter Balanced) to be administered in a specific manner, GUSD's local assessments are administered with specific requirements and purposes.

Our district uses assessment as a primary means to measure whether students are making progress towards meeting the new CA state standards. At the classroom level, teachers monitor the progress their students make throughout the year to coordinate groups and intervene for individual students effectively. Progress monitoring ensures intervention groups are fluid as students' progress and needs change throughout the year. Consistent assessments allow teachers to monitor their students and assess their growth throughout the year as well as track a child's progress from year to year. The data is also used so that teachers can create their own professional learning goals in terms of how best to support all students in their grade level.

In a broader context, when we put data together, we can see grade level, school, and district growth as well. We have a district-wide assessment timeline for the year that all sites follow, which supports monitoring progress throughout the year. Additionally, the larger picture helps to determine whether the core curriculum is effective for the majority of our students. The corresponding results inform curricular decisions, grade level progress, school goals and district wide program effectiveness.

This fall we assessed all students using a universal screening tool called Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (**DIBELS**), **STAR 360** for Reading and Math, **Bridges** (Gr. 1-5) or **CPM** (Gr. 6) Math Assessments, and **Writing Prompts**. Additionally, we use the Kindergarten Student Entrance Profile (**KSEP**) for our incoming kindergarten students and California English Language Development Test (**CELDT**) for our English Learner students.

A brief explanation of each assessment follows.

Grades K-5: **DIBELS** This universal screening tool ensures that we are monitoring students' reading proficiency of every child on campus. Specifically, DIBELS measures reading fluency for second through sixth grades. Reading fluency is one of the early indicators of stronger comprehension skills. For Kindergarten and first grade students, the test focuses on letter names and sounds. Teachers conduct a one-minute measure per student that identifies how many letters a student can name or how many words they can read.

Grades K-6: **STAR 360** is a computer adaptive program that is a benchmark assessment done four times a year. It is a standards-based assessment tool. The test measures progress towards

mastery of state standards that helps teachers pinpoint specific areas of need as well as areas where students may need to be challenged. Once students are familiar with taking the assessment, it usually takes 20-30 minutes per test for students in second through sixth grade (language arts and math). Students in Kindergarten and first grade take one 20-minute test.

Grades K-5: Bridges Math As a district, we collect unit assessments to not only inform individual and classroom performance but to inform grade level and district level curricular and program effectiveness. The highly rated Bridges program is tightly aligned with the mathematics standards and provides broad and precise information as we implement year two of the program.

Grade 6: College Preparatory Mathematics (CPM) As a district, we collect chapter assessments to also inform individual and classroom performance as well as grade level and district level curricular and program effectiveness. The CPM program provides broad and precise information as we implement year two of the program.

Grades K-6: Writing Prompts We administer three Writing Prompts a year, narrative (fictional), informative/ expository (realistic, explanatory), or opinion / argument, depending on your grade level and school. Like other assessments, the prompts reflect the CA state standards and measure student progress toward end-of-year standards.

A prompt is a written statement that explains a situation or topic for the child to respond to in writing. The student's response provides an opportunity to assess his/her ability to write a cohesive document over several days. During the prompt time, students preplan what they want to write, compose, proofread and make changes if they want. Two teachers score each student's response. Once two scores have been determined, the average of the two scores serve as a final score.

Kinder-6th grade: CELDT (California English Language Development Test) is completed once a year (in the fall) for all students learning an additional language. This is a state-mandated test that measures growth towards language proficiency and serves as a criterion for reclassification as a fluent English speaker. The test has both one on one and group testing over the course of 3-4 days at one hour or less per session depending on the grade and proficiency level.

Feel free to contact me if you have additional questions or need clarification.

Sincerely,



Bridget Braney, Ed.D.

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