



## Administration

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# VENTURA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Stanley C. Mantooth, County Superintendent of Schools

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS and SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM UPDATE

*Ventura County School Boards Association Newsletter, October 2013*

Our local schools and school districts are becoming increasingly immersed in the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and its accompanying testing component, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) – and the pace is accelerating. Assembly Bill 484, approved by the Legislature and now on the Governor's desk, will implement a new computerized testing system and new test instruments beginning next Spring, and will emphasize critical thinking skills over the multiple choice and memorization type questions in the STAR test. Gone are Scantrons and bubble sheets; replaced with a customized system tailored to each student's particular needs and level of achievement.

At the same time, teachers have been working hard to maximize instruction and curriculum with the more rigorous, problem-solving based strategies imbedded in the Common Core State Standards. These new efforts present many challenges and we must marshal our human, technological and fiscal resources. The good news is that the Governor and State Legislature have approved monetary support for this new work, identifying \$1.25 billion – or a little more than \$200 per student – to implement these critical 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning components. Half of this amount, \$625 million, has recently been apportioned to California's public school districts and charter schools as the first of two installments.

Is this enough money to get the job done? Probably not, as conservative estimates to do this with fidelity are in the \$3 billion range. However, we are thankful to have what is hopefully a first down payment and will need to use a balanced approach as to how the money is used. For example, it would be easy to allocate the entire amount to the purchase of the devices necessary to take the tests. However, this does not address other needs such as appropriately preparing classroom teachers in employing the new technology, not to mention the common core standards themselves. Due to the diversity of the school districts in Ventura County, the specific uses of these funds and leveraging with other dollars will be situational dependent upon each districts' particular needs.

A host of other issues revolve around our technology capacity and scheduling of the new tests. In order to expedite the coming testing cycle, both increased bandwidth and individual devices will be necessary to avoid stretching the cycle out over what could be a period of several weeks. Also important will be insuring that teaching staff and the students are familiar with the new format in order to avoid deeper than normal implementation dips with the new instrument. To this end, our County Office of Education Technology Services Department has been working hard on increasing our overall Countywide internet capacity and helping districts prepare at the school site level as well. Much work lies ahead, but regardless of the hurdles we face I am confident we will once again get the job done on behalf of the students we serve.

Stanley C. Mantooth, Ventura County Superintendent of Schools