What New Assessment Data Will and Won’t Tell Us

When the results of new academic assessments become available later this year, they will give us more information than previous assessments were able to and in different ways.

Not only are they new assessments, but they’re testing different skills and come with a newly revamped set of expectations based on new statewide academic standards in English and math. The new content standards set higher expectations for students and the new tests are designed to assess student performance against those higher standards, raising the bar for all students.

It should not be surprising if fewer students score within the top tiers on the testing spectrum considering the increased rigor. This does not mean that students have fallen behind or learned less. It simply means that we’re expecting more from them and aligning what’s being taught in the classroom with what they will need to know when entering college or the workforce.

The new assessments are too fundamentally different from the old exams to make any reliable comparisons between old scores and new ones. Rather, this year’s results will establish a baseline for the progress we expect students to make over time.

Think of it as pushing the reset button on assessment results—getting a fresh start.

The results are only one source of information we will be using to monitor student progress. Teachers will also gather other valuable information about each student’s learning through classroom assessment and daily student work.

Over time, student performance on the assessments is expected to improve as results are used to help shape professional learning and lesson planning.

Students in grades 3 through 8 along with those in grade 11 will take the new online exams for the first time this spring in English language arts and mathematics. The assessments will be completely online and feature a variety of different types of questions. With more short answers and extended responses, the assessments will require a deeper understanding of key concepts.

When needed, the computer-based testing will include embedded supports that will give all students the opportunity to fully demonstrate their knowledge and mastery of the new state standards.

For more information about the assessments, visit www.sbcusd.com or the California Department of Education’s [CAASPP website](http://www.californiatac.org/).