



# Columbia Union School District

*"Home of the 49ers"*

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## *Office of the Superintendent*

October 20, 2023

To: Stakeholders of Columbia Union School District  
Re: A Reflection on the CAASPP Score Reports

On Wednesday, the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) score reports became available, and the subsequent media coverage of the state's progress has painted a picture that could be interpreted as "mixed," "stagnant," or "middling" after the amount of state and federal funds that have been injected into public education from the pandemic onward.

However, what is not fully taken into account are a host of contributing internal and external environmental factors that have the ability to greatly impact student achievement and school operations. These factors include, but are not limited to, the growing personnel shortage (or crisis), turnover in teachers, leadership and boards, student attendance and overall enrollment, inconsistent revenue streams, increased number of accountability metrics and state requirements with minimal funding and support, the widening mental health crisis, the state of community support structures, and so on. But, on a more positive note, what has yet to be seen are the results of the significant investment that has been made into transitional kindergarten and other early intervention systems at the primary level. Over the next couple of years this has the potential of addressing achievement gaps and behavioral concerns as students move upward.

With that being said, it comes down to this: "What does this mean for Columbia Elementary School?"

As an educator and leader, I tend to balance out what score reports mean for a school or district because there are not just the factors listed previously, but there is also the additional context or history. It is easy to say that such high stakes assessments are not everything, but they are still a snapshot in how we are performing individually and in comparison to our neighbors and the state at large. I tend to use this as a piece of the larger conversation about what we are doing for our students in terms of the overall learning experience, support systems, functioning as a community, and offering opportunities for them to explore their interests and abilities.

As a whole, the district improved by a percentage point in those who "Meet or Exceed" in English Language Arts (38.3%) and nearly 3.5% in Math (27.82%). The number of students at "Standards Not Met" in English Language Arts is nearly 32% and is around 43% in Math. The growth has ranged from grade level to grade level, not following a particular cohort. However, our Chronic Absenteeism rate (meaning a student who has missed 10% of the school year) has decreased 11%, which is extraordinarily positive and undoubtedly helped contribute to Columbia's overall performance.

We as a district know these are not the numbers we wish to "hang our hat on," and, again, serve as a snapshot about where we are as a district. I will say that since coming to Columbia and getting to know and work alongside our staff, we have a very caring and invested group that wants to continue building on what is working and address what is not in order to best serve our students and families. What we are

working on and will continue to work on is being able to provide a consistent and meaningful learning experience for all students and support them throughout their academic journey. This process includes curriculum alignment, procuring updated materials and resources, offering meaningful professional development, establishing a support network for students in and outside of the school day, engaging with all stakeholders, and functioning effectively and efficiently in daily operations.

In the past few months, we have received a lot of positive feedback from stakeholders about our movement forward. It is our hope to use this positivity to work together in a collaborative effort to continue moving the district onward.

To plagiarize myself from an earlier letter to stakeholders, the district is committed towards enhancing the learning experience for students and providing the necessary support for students, staff, and parents to continue its successes, addressing its areas for growth, and building for a positive future. The 2023-24 school year offers an opportunity for the district to collaboratively craft with stakeholders not just a new LCAP, but a comprehensive strategic plan.

In the beginning of November, stakeholders can expect an opportunity to provide some commentary and feedback to a number of topics that include items such as communication, programming, interventions and support, facilities, safety and security, technology, and so on. It is anticipated this will help us move towards drafting and ultimately fulfilling a comprehensive strategic plan.

I want to say thank you to all the families for entrusting their children to us. I also want to recognize, again, the thoughtfulness and talent of our staff here at Columbia and I cannot wait to see what the upcoming years have in store for us all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "N. Wade".

Dr. Nicolas Wade  
Superintendent