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Reports

Graduation
Nothing to do with CAASPP test scores

BACKGROUND:

Few issues of public concern transcend and permeate other priorities of civil life more so than the state of public education. It is an issue discussed in households throughout Tulare County, regardless of the socio-economic status of the adults in that household. For those on the lower end of the economic ladder, education is seen as a means for the economic advancement of their children; for those who have achieved economic prosperity in the post-war economy it is understood that academic achievement as a secondary student is an important component of ultimate success in life, regardless of one's chosen goals.

Whenever the discussion of student achievement, the state of public education or the quality of public teachers and educators is the focal point of parents, citizens or professionals, inevitably the conversation will include test scores. As a citizenry we have come to accept test scores as the primary indicator of the quality of education in our community. Understanding that intelligent arguments can be made regarding their accuracy, today test scores are accepted as the best and most common indicator of public education quality and of student success.

The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) System was established on January 1, 2014. The CAASPP System replaced the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program, which became inoperative on July1, 2013.

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION:

The Tulare County Civil Grand Jury (TCCGJ) believes it is vital to the communal discussion that citizens understand the process that yields the test scores, both in origin and administration. Such comprehension will enhance the discussion of their utility and their use as indicators of student achievement and future success.



METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:

1. Reviewed relevant documents and data.
2. Conducted interviews.
3. Attended school board meetings.

FACTS:

1. California State Board of Education mandates that students be administered annual state assessment tests in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11. These tests are comprehensively known as the CAASPP.

2. Per the California Department of Education "the primary purpose of the CAASPP system is to assist teachers, administrators, students and parents by promoting high quality teaching and learning through the use of a variety of assessment approaches and item types".

3. For the test year 2018-2019 the statewide results in all tested grades were as follows:
   - English Language Arts /Literacy:
   50.87% met or exceeded standards
   - Mathematics:
   39.73% met or exceeded standards

4. For the test year 2018-2019 the results for all tested grades in Tulare County were as follows:
   -English Language Arts/Literacy:
   42.80% met or exceeded standards
   -Mathematics:
   29.30 % met or exceeded standards

5. In 2019, the statewide graduation rate was 88.1%. The Tulare County rate was 90.1%.

6. The four year graduation rate is based on the percentage of students who attend a comprehensive high school and graduate with a regular high school diploma within four years of entering grade nine.

FINDINGS:

F1: The Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) and school districts within Tulare County use the annual results of the CAASPP as a tool to assess the needs of students.

F2. Student test scores are not indicators that individual students will graduate from high school. There is no data available to indicate that students benefit academically from taking the tests.

F3. Data indicates students in Tulare County scored below the average rates in the state of California. However, scores have shown improvement over previous years.

F4. The graduation rate indicates that many students who receive a standard diploma scored below the acceptable standards of the CAASPP.

F5. Official data is not available regarding the performance of individual high school graduates and their results on the CAASPP.

CONCLUSION:

The CAASPP is one assessment tool of student academic progress. Passing scores are not used as prerequisites to graduating from high school.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1. That more information be disseminated to parents and the public regarding the purposes of the CAASPP, the use of the results and its role in the academic progress and support of the individual student.