

## **ASSESSMENT AND TESTING COMMITTEE**

Jennifer Pettey, Chairperson  
Steve Seal, Vice Chairperson  
Tiffany Farnsworth, Recorder  
Gayle Bilek, Board Liaison  
Vernon Gettone, Consultant  
Norma Sanchez, Consultant  
Patricia Rucker, Legislative Advocate

### **MAJOR POLICY** - Immediate Action (2/3rd vote required)

A. None

### **MAJOR POLICY** - Second Reading

A. None

### **MAJOR POLICY** - First Reading

A. None

### **OTHER ITEMS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION**

A. None

### **REFERRALS TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- A. NBI 5/14-2 – “That CTA shall conduct a statewide on-line membership survey about the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium field test and in a timely manner, shall make the results of this survey public.”
- B. 5/14-11 – “That CTA produce, through electronic means, a members-only survey that examines the roll-out of SBAC tests this past year. This survey will explore the quality, age-appropriateness, functionality and user-friendliness of these tests including written feedback. The results shall be published using existing means on or before January 2015.

### **MATTERS PENDING**

A. None

### **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

1. Committee gave feedback about SBAC field test experience.
2. Shared information about the Digital Library. Preview of Digital Library will be available on the CDE and SBAC website from June 3 to September 30, 2014.
3. Committee elected officers for 2014-2015: Jennifer Pettey – Chair, Steve Seal – Vice Chair, Jennifer Skellet - Recorder

4. Shared report (on the following pages) in response to NBI 6/13-21. We have made a request that this report be distributed in the Thursday mailings.

**May 31, 2014**

**TO:** Dean Vogel – CTA President

**FROM:** Jennifer Pettey, Chair – CTA Standing Committee on Assessment and Testing

**RE: AST Response to NBI 6/13-21** – California’s Participation in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium - That CTA investigate the impacts of California participating in Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium in the following areas: 1) costs, 2) impact on student learning, 3) time spent on test preparation and testing, and 4) readiness of districts to implement. If investigation proves not to be beneficial to public education, CTA will see the quick and urgent withdrawl [sic] from SBAC.

*According to EdWeek,<sup>1</sup> 26 states plus the District of Columbia are now planning to implement SBAC or PARCC tests spring 2015. These 26 states represent 42 percent of public school enrollments across the country, according to our calculations.*

*California now represents more than 50 percent of the enrollment for the 17 states identified by EdWeek still planning to use Smarter Balanced tests spring 2015. In most states, those students participating in the field tests took them in only one subject, English/language arts or mathematics. Five states, like California, are testing nearly all their students, and are giving some version of the tests in both subjects to meet the U.S. Department of Education's "double testing" waiver requirements. Through May 2, 2014, California provided 75 percent of the SBAC field tests administered spring 2014.*

## **BACKGROUND**

CTA supports ongoing comprehensive assessment of student growth using multiple measures. The term multiple measures refers to a variety of teacher selected assessments both formal and informal. CTA believes the primary purpose of assessment is to support learning by:

1. Providing a basis for determining instructional strategies and appropriate learning experience for students.
2. Assisting students and their parents/guardians in identifying the students’ strengths and needs.
3. Improving instruction.
4. Measuring a program’s effectiveness.
5. Communicating learning expectations.<sup>2</sup>
- 6.

CTA also believes an integral part of the educational program is a system of multiple measures to gather a complete picture of student achievement. Valid testing and assessment is accomplished through a wide variety of teacher selected performance based assessments: developmentally appropriate tests, rubrics, and critical thinking activities. Assessments should allow for students to be measured by a variety of methods that address all learning modalities. Testing and assessment

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/05/21/32assessment\\_ep.h33.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/05/21/32assessment_ep.h33.html)

<sup>2</sup> CTA policy, Testing/Assessment: Assessment of Student Learning, p. 374

should be used as a diagnostic tool for the improvement of both instruction and learning; reflect what students know and can do; and be free from cultural, racial, gender, socio-economic and linguistic biases. Testing and assessment should measure growth of each student over time documenting the progress of individual students, not the comparison of students.<sup>3</sup>

As a condition of applying for the federal Race to the Top (RTT) grant program, states were required to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in ELA and mathematics by the fall of 2010. In August 2010, the SBE adopted these standards.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires testing in ELA and mathematics in grades three through eight and once in grades 10 through 12. The U.S. Department of Education, using Race to the Top grant funding, issued a competitive grant for the development of a comprehensive assessment system based on the CCSS in ELA and mathematics that would adhere to the testing requirements of the federal ESEA.

Two assessment consortia were funded through this process: the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARC) and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). Each consortium was awarded grant funding to develop an assessment system aligned to the CCSS in ELA and mathematics and to help participating states implement the standards and the common assessments. Both consortia are scheduled to implement these assessments in 2014-15 and include computer administered assessments.

California joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) as a governing state in 2011, for the purpose of developing assessments that are aligned to the Common Core standards. SBAC is a multi-state consortium developing assessments aligned to the Common Core standards. The state administered pilot tests in 2012-13 and is in the midst of field testing in the 2013-14 school year. California also committed to accepting the performance standards established by SBAC (rather than by the SBE), and entering into contracts for the administration of the SBAC assessments.

In 1997, state law established the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program. California Education Code (EC) sections 60600–60649 required the development of tests aligned with the California content standards in the subject areas of English Language Arts, mathematics, science, and history/social science, in order to measure how well local educational agencies (LEAs) provide instruction covering—and how well students are achieving—the knowledge, concepts, and skills that students should acquire at each grade level identified in the content standards.

The STAR Program was scheduled to sunset July 1, 2014. In response to California Education Code (EC) Section 60604.5, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI) consulted with stakeholders and, on January 8, 2013, provided the Legislature with recommendations for transitioning California to a future assessment system.<sup>4</sup> Foundational ideals in the SSPI's 12 recommendations included:

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<sup>3</sup> CTA policy, Testing/Assessment: Student Performance, pp. 377-78

<sup>4</sup> The SSPI's recommendations report can be found on the Statewide Pupil Assessment System Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/ab250.asp>.

- a recognition that assessment is an integral part of cycle of standards, curriculum, and instruction
- a recommendation for a system that promotes and models high quality teaching and learning

On February 19, 2013, AB 484 was introduced to address the SSPI's recommendations. Signed into law in October 2013, AB 484 (Bonilla, Chapter 489, Statutes of 2013) replaced the STAR with the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) as the statewide assessment program for specified pupils. The STAR Program became inoperative after the completion of the 2013 test administration. For the 2013–14 school year, the CAASPP assessment system encompasses the following required assessments:

- Smarter Balanced system of assessments for mathematics and English–language arts
- California Standards Tests (CST) for Science in grades five, eight, and ten
- California Modified Assessment (CMA) for Science in grades five, eight, and ten
- California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) for Science in grades five, eight, and ten and for mathematics and English–language arts in grades two through eleven

AB 484 (Bonilla, Chapter 489, Statutes of 2013) also provides direction to the State Board of Education (SBE), the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI), and the California Department of Education (CDE) on the transition of California's current assessment system to the CAASPP, the administration of the CAASPP, and the expansion of the CAASPP to include additional assessments beyond those specified in this bill. The California Department of Education (CDE) established a new Statewide Assessment Transition Office in the Assessment Development and Administration Division to assist in the transition effort.

CTA supported AB 484(Bonilla) because it would modify the stated purpose of the State's comprehensive assessment system. This significant policy leverages the magnitude of impact on student learning away from labeling winners and losers. This new statute is aligned to CTA policies on assessment as well as the 17 principles of teacher evaluation.<sup>5</sup>

**From:** "assisting teachers, administrators, pupils and parents to improve teaching and learning, including first and foremost, to provide information on the academic and progress of individual pupils."

**TO:** "model and promote high-quality teaching and learning, including providing information to pupils, parents, teachers, schools and school districts on a timely basis so the information can be used to further the development of the pupil or to improve the educational program."

Finally, after multiple months of a long standoff with the U.S. Department of Education, California successfully negotiated a waiver that will allow it to replace its state tests this spring in favor of giving only common-core-aligned field tests to about 3 million students. Along with producing data and holding schools and districts accountable for student performance, testing students annually in grades 3-8 and once in high school is an anchor policy of the ESEA reauthorization.

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<sup>5</sup> The CTA Teacher Evaluation Framework can be found on the CTA website at <http://www.cta.org/Issues-and-Action/Teacher-Quality/Teacher-Eval-FAQ.aspx>

The waiver would allow California, the largest state with the largest population of English-learners, to deviate from this; the field tests aren't designed to easily produce data that can be used for accountability. By going an entire year without data in an accountability system, this breaks an important student-performance trend line. Growth models often use two, three, or four years of data, so interrupting the trend line and essentially starting over means accountability may be delayed for more than just this one year.

Both the state and federal accountability systems (Academic Performance Index and Adequate Yearly Progress, respectively), are based primarily upon pupil test score data. Both accountability systems also link interventions to that data. There is concern that pupil test score data, based on new assessments aligned to new standards, will not immediately be a reliable measure for accountability purposes.

Unrelated to the adoption of the SBAC assessments, California law was recently changed and requires the API, beginning with the API Base calculation in 2016, to constitute no more than 40% of the value of the API for high schools, and constitute at least 60% of the value of the API for elementary and middle schools. The API is also used for purposes of calculating Adequate Yearly Progress, as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The API base and growth determinations will not be fully implemented until the 2017-18 school year.

## **COSTS**

Testing is a complex, varied activity and so counting its costs is not simple or easy. There are many separate cost elements to include or not to include. The NBI provided a valuable opportunity for CTA to analyze cost issues for four common LEA functions related in the current STAR:

- Purchased test materials and services: When California purchases a test from a commercial vendor, it is not only purchasing test booklets. Services include examiner instructions, scoring and reporting services as well as the assurance that the test meets a certain level of quality, including national norms and reliability. *For the first time in the state's history, California's participation in an assessment consortium means that the state participated in an assessment construction from the ground up – rather than relying on market-driven research to make such an important assessment decision.*
- Personnel time: No matter the assessment system, the local infrastructure to manage assessment activities requires staff to coordinate, monitor as well as classroom teachers to administer the tests, collect the tests, and (hopefully) explain the results to students and parents. Counselors may also be called upon to explain test results. Clerical staff may sort tests and mail results. This is not quantified in this analysis.
- Student time: Students spend time taking tests and their time is valuable. Whether this time should be counted as a cost of testing is a different issue. The premise of this NBI seems to argue that if students weren't taking a test, they would probably be learning something – assuming of course that students are not learning anything while taking a test. The NBI also assumes that the test is not an integral part of the students' instructional program – an idea that is not supported by CTA policy.

- Administrative overhead: Standardized tests can require an increased use of administrative supplies which are most likely funded in varying line items in the local budget: postage to notify parents, forms on which to plot students' scores, computer software for analyzing scores, and so on. In California, most of this work is performed as part of the services agreement with Educational Testing Service (ETS) or by the CDE. In addition, maintenance and security of testing materials is an invisible cost pressure for most LEAs.

The significant cost differences between the current assessment system and the SBAC assessment can be viewed as problematic – assuming there is no value in increasing the cognitive demand for students in order to be able to respond to assessment items. The problem associated with any assessment is not in reality represented by the purchase price paid to the commercial vendors, but rather, by the assumption that there is a lost opportunity for learning that could have taken place in the time devoted to standardized tests.

There are two elements to quantifying the costs for the assessments: the student assessment and the contract for managing the assessment system. The STAR testing contractor for the STAR Program is Educational Testing Service (ETS). The CDE contract covers the costs of all required STAR Program testing materials, the scoring of answer documents, and the production of reports. Costs associated with optional materials or services (such as the purchase of additional score reports, etc.) are the responsibility of the school district or charter school.

The contractor will provide assessment tools for local adult schools and provide accountability via student data collection, performance based outcomes, and federal reporting assessment instruments, and support materials to all state and local programs for all levels of adult basic education; collect data to report required assessment and accountability information meeting state and federal reporting requirements for performance benchmarks; and provide training and technical assistance related to the accurate administration, collection and reporting of assessment and accountability information.

NOTE: According to the California Code of Regulations, each local educational agency (LEA) shall designate one person as the test coordinator for each assessment by completing the designation form. A new designation form is required each school year and is submitted to the testing contractor, not to the California Department of Education. The designated test coordinator receives important communications and has access to secure information during the school year from the assessment contractor. LEA costs for this central office position are not included in this cost review.

#### Costs for STAR

The state did not receive federal NCLB Title VI funds to offset state assessments costs for the STAR program, the CAHSEE, and the California English Language Development Test. As large scale ordinary standardized student tests go, the STAR assessments are inexpensive. STAR tests include the following item formats:

- **Selected-response items** (i.e., multiple-choice items on the CSTs, CMA, and STS that require students to select an answer from a list that includes one correct answer within a list

of four answer options for the CSTs and STS and a list of three answer options for the CMA)

- **Constructed-response items** (i.e., a direct writing assessment that requires students to write a response to a prompt as part of the CST for English–Language Arts or CMA for English–Language Arts administered in grades four and seven)
- **Performance tasks** (i.e., tasks on the CAPA that are administered on a one-on-one basis by a trained CAPA examiner that asks the student to perform a task using manipulatives and/or stimulus cards; the examiner observes the performance and records the response according to a specific scoring guides)

Before STAR sunset, the state provided LEAs and charter schools with an apportionment reimbursement for management and reporting required Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) assessments – approximately \$15.1 million.

- \$0.38 for the completion of demographic information for each student not tested with the CSTs, the CMA, the STS, or the CAPA.
- \$2.52 per student for the completion of demographic information and administration of the CSTs, the CMA, or a combination thereof.
- \$2.52 per student for the completion of demographic information and administration of the STS to Spanish-speaking English learners.
- \$5.00 per student for the completion of demographic information and administration of the CAPA.

#### Costs for SBAC

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee: Initial estimates indicate annual total costs would be approximately \$97.1 million General Fund/Proposition 98 at full implementation, which is approximately \$31.1 million General Fund/Proposition 98 more than currently being allocated annually for the STAR program at full implementation.

- This assumes grades 3-8 and grade 11 are assessed (\$66.4 million) per federal mandate
- Grade 9, 11, and 12 receive an "add-on" assessment (\$30.7 million)

This number crunching actually oversimplifies and distorts the SBAC costs. The Consortium and State Managed Per Pupil Fees are based on current estimates and have not been finalized.

Smarter Balanced has released cost estimates for its assessments that include expenses for ongoing research and development of the assessment system, as well as test administration and scoring. The end-of-year summative assessment alone is estimated to cost \$22.50 per student. The full suite of summative, interim, and formative assessments is estimated to cost \$27.30 per student. These costs are estimates because a sizable portion of the cost is for test administration and scoring services that will not be provided by Smarter Balanced; states will either provide these services directly or procure them from vendors in the private sector.

California needs to purchase an assessment program for 3.2 million students in grades 3-8 and 11. Two purchase considerations were presented to the SBE in July 2013:

1. Option 1: Purchase the Complete System – \$67 million includes summative assessments, interim assessments, and formative tools (the Digital Library)
2. Option 2: Basic System – \$58 million for Summative Assessments only

For each option, an optional set of high school assessments for grades nine, ten, and twelve can be added for an additional cost. In each estimate, calculations include services provided by Smarter Balanced (consortium-managed services) through the UCLA/CRESST partnership.

Similar to the state’s current agreements with two separate vendors for the test itself and data management, an assessment contract with SBAC can include two different services:

- (1) Consortium managed services are simply the individual costs for summative assessments (including mathematics and English Language Arts) as well as the formative tool digital library and interim assessment library access. Estimated cost of Consortium Managed Services is calculated using the Consortium Managed Services Per Pupil Fee times the Maximum Pupil Count. Consortium managed services include, but are not limited to, item development, validity research, digital library hosting, and general communication tools.
  - For each tested grade (3-8 and 11) this cost is set at \$9.55 per student. .
  - Separately, the state could also purchase high school tests. These are state defined secure SBAC assessments in grades 9, 10, and 12. This cost is set at \$9.55 per student.
  - If the state purchased only the summative assessments for grades 3-12, the cost per student drops to \$6.20.
  
- (2) The state could consider a services agreement with SBAC for the state managed assessment reporting services that are currently provided by the CDE through its contracts with several vendors. Estimated cost of State Managed Services is calculated using the State Managed Services Per Pupil Fee times the Total Number of Pupils Tested. State managed services include, but are not limited to, test administration, help desk services for local educational agencies, and test administration platform hosting.
  - For the ESEA mandated tested grades (3-8 and 11) this cost is set at \$17.75 per student.
  - For SBAC assessments in grades 9, 10, and 12. This cost is set at \$17.75 per student.
  - If the state purchased only the summative assessments for grades 3-12, the cost per student drops to \$16.30.
  - The estimated costs for non-specified grades are currently under development.

The Sale of the Century: These estimates assume that all 21 governing states will be purchasing the SBAC assessments for grades 3-8 and 11. California’s purchase for the grade 3-8 and 11 SBAC assessments will be capped at 1 million students but the state will receive an agreement to test

- *6.6 million students in grades 3-12 using the summative assessment: The dollar cost per student **drops** to \$6.19. No additional administrative services are provided.*

- *Just over 4 million students in grades 3-8 and 11 only: The dollar cost per student **drops** to \$3.36 for tests administered under the complete package agreement.*

### **Impact on Student Learning**

CTA believes standards, curriculum, and assessment should be linked in a recursive process to provide a well-rounded education. Curriculum should include, but not be limited to, required standards which should be introduced into the curriculum at a rate that allows educators the opportunity to assess each student's progress towards the mastery of the standards. <sup>6</sup>

*Will SBAC assessments give us better information about how well students were taught?* The definition of "high-quality assessment" provides that assessments should enable measurement of pupil achievement and pupil growth to the extent feasible.

According to the 2013 STAR Program Information Packet for School District and School Staff (p. 13), STAR test results provide school districts and schools with achievement information that can serve different purposes. The following uses are appropriate for STAR results:

- To help inform school district and school-level decisions related to student learning
- To identify grade-level curricular strengths and needs
- To examine the multiyear progress of groups of students within a grade level (These analyses should take into consideration that results for each year in a grade level are for different groups of students.)
- To help identify groups of students requiring additional, targeted assistance (e.g., students with disabilities, ELs, socioeconomically disadvantaged students)
- To identify curricular areas in which additional diagnosis is needed for groups of students in order to prescribe a course of intervention or remediation or prescribe specialized services

STAR test results were not valid to be used in isolation to make inferences about instructional needs. The results should be used with caution and only in conjunction with other related achievement information, such as grades and locally administered tests, for the following purposes:

- To identify the level and range of students' achievement in a class or grade
- To inform placement, retention, and promotion decisions for individual students

STAR results were not valid to be used for the following purposes:

- To compare performance between subjects tested (e.g., English–language arts and mathematics) (The STAR test for each subject covers different content. The performance standards were set independently for each subject and grade and cannot be compared.)
- To compare performance between STAR tests (e.g., CST, CMA, CAPA, or STS) (Each STAR test followed an independent procedure during test development and the

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<sup>6</sup> CTA policy, Standards based instruction, p. 271-72

establishment of performance levels; thus, performance between STAR tests cannot be compared.)<sup>7</sup>

- To monitor the progress of cohorts of students as they move through the grades (Differences in state content standards tested between grades, differences in performance level setting, and other factors prohibit cohort tracking with STAR results.)

The consortium assessments are vastly different than the STAR assessments. For example, SBAC assessments are designed to be online and computer adaptive as opposed to the paper-and-pencil STAR assessments currently administered to pupils. There will be optional initial and formative assessments as part of this system. The Smarter Balanced interim tests will be available in two versions, one of which “mirrors the length and scope of the summative assessment and yields a score on the same scale as the summative assessment that can be used as a growth or achievement metric.”<sup>8</sup> These assessments will be given throughout the year to help teachers and administrators receive interim data on how pupils are progressing on academic content throughout the year.

There are two types of test preparation contemplated in the NBI: the instruction and review pertaining to the subject area(s) of focus; and instruction in mechanical aspects of taking the test (how to mark the answer sheet) or test taking in general (why guessing is okay). This NBI counts both as having a critical impact on opportunity to teach and opportunity to learn – assuming that focus on the latter (test wiseness) has a deleterious impact on the former (content instruction).

Defining impact on student learning: As a term of art, different stakeholders rely on different data to define impact. There are basically 4 terms of art that define the impact of *any* assessment on student learning.

**Categorical concurrence** is a basic measure of alignment between content standards and test items. This term refers to the proportion of overlap between the content stated in the standards document and that assessed by items on the test.

NOTE: California has an assessment blueprint – a subset of the state’s prior academic content standards to which the core of the assessment matrix is aligned. In other words, California narrowed the number of standards that the STAR would test. In looking at the test blueprints, the narrow range of content coverage means many state assessments do not evaluate fully what the students were taught. This issue pertains to the mathematics tests for Grades 2 through 5, the integrated math tests, and the history-social science tests. Obviously, longer tests are not the best solution to address the problem of content coverage.

The CCSS establish what students need to learn, but they do not dictate how teachers should teach. SBAC assessments will be aligned to the standards and replace existing end of year state assessments. To meet the challenge of content coverage, the SBAC assessments have several strategies in place:(a) redistribute items to increase content

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<sup>7</sup> Thus, the reason why comparisons of student growth from current STAR assessments are not valid for performance evaluation.

<sup>8</sup> According to *Coming Together to Raise Achievement*, an ETS document dated June 2013 with descriptions approved by SBAC.

coverage on some standards; (b) consider how some content can be presented in computer based assessment items; (c) modifying or merging related content objectives to increase the number of items targeting a given content area.

**Depth-of-Knowledge (DOK)** measures the type of cognitive processing required by items and content standards. For the most part, STAR assessments expect a student to identify or recall basic facts. If we accept the SBAC promise, the student will be expected to use reasoning by manipulating information or strategizing. In mathematics, the STAR may ask the student to identify the appropriate use of a decimal among several answer choices. This task is less complex than trying to explain the concept of a decimal and how and why it can be moved. In English-language arts, asking a student to identify Greek mythology requires less processing compared with asking a student to use knowledge of Greek mythology to understand the origin and meaning of new words.

NOTE: There is a lack of consistency between the cognitive requirements (depth-of-knowledge) of the assessment items in the STAR blueprint and the content standards (CSTs). This issue pertains to English-language arts (ELA) Grade 6 and 8; math Grades 2 and 7; the general math test; all three integrated math tests; and, all three history-social science tests

The CCSS establish what students need to learn, but they do not dictate how teachers should teach. SBAC assessments will be aligned to the standards and replace existing end of year state assessments.

**The range-of-knowledge measure** looks at the breadth of knowledge represented by test items in greater detail. Categorical concurrence simply notes whether a sufficient number of items on the test covers each general content topic (individual strands). Another way to think about this is curriculum alignment. Current assessments in the STAR measure how well the student did *on the test*. The SBAC assessment is intended to quantify evidence in the achievement level descriptors to explain how well the student was taught.

The **balance-of-representation** criterion focuses on content coverage – meaning the extent to which assessment items are **evenly distributed** across content standards. The state’s prior academic content standards the content standard includes multiple objectives that target discrete skills. The blueprint for the current CSTs has been rated to have 0 percent acceptable balance of representation across the standards because they do not include the type of open ended questions that can target the discrete skills of the state’s academic content standards.

The CCSS establish what students need to learn, but they do not dictate how teachers should teach. SBAC assessments will be aligned to the standards and replace existing end of year state assessments.

## **Time spent on Test Preparation and Testing**

CTA understands that statewide tests are a major component of California’s education assessment system. The main use of these tests should be as a diagnostic tool. Local governing boards, the State Board and legislators should evaluate curriculum based on the results of local and statewide assessments.<sup>9</sup>

NOTE: *It is interesting to note that The STAR tests were not timed. School districts are provided with recommended times, which vary by grade and subject, for students to complete the tests. Students who are actively working on a test at the end of the recommended time must be allowed more time to complete it. Because the CAPA is administered individually, the testing time varies from one student to another, based on such factors as the student’s response time and attention span.*<sup>10</sup>

The best academic preparation for state assessments is good instruction. Per EC Section 60611, except for materials specifically provided by the CDE or its agents, no program or materials shall be used by any school district or employee of a school district that are specifically formulated or intended to prepare pupils for the statewide assessments, including the STAR tests.

- Practice tests provided by the contractor for grades two through four for the limited purpose of familiarizing pupils with the use of scannable test booklets or answer sheets are not subject to this prohibition.
- Released test questions (RTQs) from the CSTs can be used in the academic preparation of pupils for the STAR tests only if those instructional materials are embedded in an instructional program that is intended to improve pupil learning per EC Section 60611(b). *Using released test questions (RTQs) from the CSTs as test practice immediately prior to testing—not embedded in the instructional program throughout the year—would be an example of inappropriate test preparation.* Additional appropriate uses of released test questions, include, but are not limited to:<sup>11</sup>
  - Gauging the effectiveness of classroom tests
  - Analyzing whether classroom assessments address standards with the rigor that the state assessments do
  - Analyzing whether current classroom assessments adequately cover the academic content standards
  - Analyzing whether current classroom assessments present a variety of ways standards can be assessed

State law required that STAR tests be administered by LEAs at approximately the same time during the instructional year. The test administration window differs for the two types of test administrations of the STAR Program: (1) the multiple-choice and CAPA performance task testing for all LEAs with students in grades two through eleven; and (2) the direct writing test for LEAs with students in grades four and seven.

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<sup>9</sup> CTA policy, Educational Accountability, p. 346

<sup>10</sup> 2013 STAR Program Information Packet for School District and School Staff, p.10

<sup>11</sup> *Guidelines on Academic Preparation for State Assessments*, posted on the CDE Assessment Information Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/resources.asp>,

The STAR testing window for the CSTs, CMA, and STS multiple-choice and CAPA performance task testing was a 25-day window, scheduled for 12 days before and 12 days after the day on which a school completes 85 percent of its instructional days for the year.

Individual school calendars are a local LEA decision, and testing windows vary for each LEA. For that reason, STAR testing could have started as early as February and as late as June, depending on the LEA's calendar. The district STAR coordinator designated annually by the district superintendent is responsible for working with the testing contractor to set up the district's testing window.

SBAC assessments have a 12-week test window. This may accommodate schools that do not have sufficient computer capacity for a large pupil population, but also raises concerns that some pupils could be assessed with 12 weeks less instruction. According to the Frequently Asked Questions on CDE's website, "SBAC will continue to evaluate the impact of the summative assessment administration window on student scores during the pilot test (early 2013) and the field test (early 2014) to determine whether adjustments in scoring or administration are necessary."

### **Readiness of districts to implement**

CTA believes in meaningful educational accountability systems. Any accountability process must assure that teachers are provided with the professional development and resources needed to help them align their curriculum, instruction and assessment with the adopted standards. Special programs should help teacher-design, implement and coordinate programs to support students who do not meet the standards. Students must be provided with the materials and facilities needed to learn and meet adopted standards.<sup>12</sup>

CTA also believes that the use of statewide longitudinal data should be limited and relevant to informing effective instructional strategies and improving student outcomes. Multiple measures of student achievement must be used along with any mandated state and federal assessment system to show the progress of each student. Data will be reported that tracks the overall growth of each individual student from year to year. The use of longitudinal diagnostic information about student learning shall be limited to decisions about instructional strategies, allocation of classroom resources, student placement, and professional development opportunities designed by educators.<sup>13</sup>

CTA also believes in order for standardized achievement test and/or assessments to support quality education:

1. Content standards must be prioritized to support effective curriculum, instruction, professional development and assessment.
2. Stakeholders must determine high priority content standards. These standards must be clearly and thoroughly described so that the knowledge and skills students need to demonstrate are evident.
3. Valid results of assessment of high-priority content standards must be reported standard-by-standard for each student school and district.

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<sup>12</sup> CTA policy, Educational Accountability, p. 346

<sup>13</sup> CTA policy,, Educational Excellence: Consequences of Accountability Systems, p.347

4. The breadth of the curriculum must be monitored to ensure that attention is given to all content standards and subject areas, including those that are not assessed.
5. Tests will assess the content standards of the current academic year in which those content standards are taught.
6. Progress should be continually monitored to ensure that assessments are appropriate for the purposes for which they are intended.<sup>14</sup>
- 7.

*Have schools and pupils had the time and resources to be fully prepared for the administration of SBAC assessments in the 2014-15 school year?*

The SBE adopted common core standards in English language arts and mathematics in August 2010, and is required to adopt revised frameworks that are aligned to the common core standards in mathematics by November 30, 2013, and English language arts by May 30, 2014. The SBE approved supplemental instructional materials that are aligned to the common core standards in English language arts in 2012, and is expected to approve supplemental instructional materials aligned to the common core standards in mathematics in July 2013. The SBE is authorized to conduct an adoption of basic instructional materials that are aligned to the common core standards in mathematics for grades K-8, by March 30, 2014. The 2013 Budget Act appropriates \$1.2 billion for common core activities.

*Do all teachers and pupils have sufficient computer literacy skills necessary for the new computer-adaptive assessments?* Of course not. The state's \$1.25 billion commitment to support CCSS implementation is significant.

The Smarter Balanced Pilot Test was administered in the spring of 2013. The purpose of the Practice Test was to give students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the general public the opportunity to become familiar with the online testing environment. In California, over 200,000 students in 1,400 schools participated. Twenty-four staff members from the CDE and SBE observed Pilot Test administrations at area schools. Assessment observations occurred at 17 schools (primarily elementary schools) within 11 school districts. The observers collected several consistent insights:<sup>15</sup>

- Students reported that participating in the test was fun, but the content was difficult.
- Teachers and administrators are supportive of computer-based tests, but indicated that clearer directions for test setup, administration, and security are needed – significant time was required to adequately prepare to administer the tests.
- Overall, the technology worked well, but various technology features and computer tools need to be fixed or fine-tuned.

CTA believes a Professional Learning Community (PLC) is based on participants reaching consensus on their mission, values, norms and goals. Educators need more opportunities to participate in extended learning opportunities and productive, collaborative Professional Learning Communities. Building enough time into the educator's current work day for ongoing, sustained,

<sup>14</sup> CTA policy, Testing/Assessment: Standardized Testing of Students, pp.377-78

<sup>15</sup> SOURCE: SBE Agenda Item 3, July 2013. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/main201307.asp>.

educator-driven professional development is essential. This allows educators to analyze data in the development of high quality curriculum, instruction, and assessments to increase their influence over crucial areas of school decision-making.<sup>16</sup>

Schools, teachers and pupils could use additional time to have greater opportunities for professional development, obtain appropriate instructional materials, deliver and receive instruction specific to the common core standards, and build computer and broadband capacity. The Smarter Balanced Digital Library is a collection of instructional materials with a focus on the Common Core State Standards and formative assessment tools and practices. The Digital Library, which is scheduled for release in the fall of 2014, is a critical component of the Smarter Balanced system of assessments that will include a variety of resources to improve teaching and learning. It is interactive and allows educators to use and rate resources and collaborate.

Each governing state was asked to form a State Network of Educators (SNE) – a team of approximately 150 California educators – to evaluate and screen resources professional learning resources for inclusion in the Smarter Balanced Digital Library. Between September 2013 and September 2014, members of the SNE will:

- Participate in five web-based trainings
- Propose and review content for the Digital Library
- Provide feedback on the resources and the usability of the Digital Library

In May 2013, the CDE announced the opportunity to apply for California’s SNE. Applications were accepted through June 14, 2013, and over 400 applications were received to fill California’s 150-member network. Members of the SNE were chosen by California’s State Leadership Team, and included teachers and administrators from K–12 and higher education with expertise in English-language arts, mathematics, science, and/or history-social science. Members must also have experience providing services to students who are English learners, students with disabilities, gifted students, and/or general education students. California submitted the names of the SNE to Smarter Balanced at the end of June 2013.

The CDE released a SBAC readiness assessment. Although the SBAC readiness tool was sent to district superintendents, this CDE survey was sent to district IT administrators and testing coordinators. In addition to the technology expenditure questions, the CDE survey also asks districts to evaluate planning and a timeline for readiness to pare down the assessment window from the SBAC 12 weeks to the state’s statutory 5 week window.

The Technology Readiness Tool (TRT) collected school-level information technology information to help the state evaluate the technology at schools as it relates to the Smarter Balanced online student assessment system. The first data collection window (Spring 2012) was open from April 16, 2012 until June 30, 2012. In California, 4,377 schools (42%) representing 456 districts submitted complete TRT information. An additional 1,237 schools submitted partial information. The second data collection window Survey window (June 21 to July 19, 2013) netted complete surveys from an additional 355 districts, 13 COEs, and 22 independent charter schools.

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<sup>16</sup> CTA policy, Professional Learning Communities, p. 327

The district submission status report (XLS)<sup>17</sup> summarized the school completion percentage for each district in California. The report's data are self-reported, unverified, and unaudited. The Technology Readiness Tool (TRT) assesses each school's current capacity and compares them to the technology that is expected to be required for new Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium assessments. The tool collects information in four major areas or dimensions:

- Devices (i.e. testing computers)
- Device-to-tester Ratio
- Network Infrastructure
- Staff and Personnel Technology Readiness

The CDE survey also included questions related to Staff/Personnel issues & Roadblocks Survey Questions. The six school-level survey questions will assist SBAC and individual states understand the “readiness” of schools from a staff and personnel standpoint. The answers rank the following items from zero to ten in regards to level of concern:

- Having a sufficient number of test administrators to support online testing.
- Test administrators having sufficient technical understanding to support online testing.
- Test administrators having sufficient technical understanding to support online testing.
- Having a sufficient number of technology support staff to support online testing.
- Technology support staff having sufficient technical understanding to support online testing.
- Providing all appropriate training needed for technology support staff.

Staff comment:

CTA believes standardized tests, whether norm-, criterion- or standards-referenced, can validly assess only a limited range of student learning. Therefore, they should be only an adjunct or supplement to information obtained through school- and classroom-based assessment conducted by teachers for the purpose of supporting and strengthening instruction as well as for summarizing and evaluating student learning.

CTA also believes the administration of standardized tests includes the responsibility to educate the stakeholders in the purpose of the test, the meaning of test results, and the accurate interpretation of conclusions.<sup>18</sup>

CTA believes curriculum content standards, student performance standards, and student assessment programs are interrelated and interdependent; neither the state nor school district should develop or apply any of the three components separately from the others. Both standards and assessment instruments must be appropriate for students at each grade level and in each subject.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/sbac-itr-spr2012sum.asp>

<sup>18</sup> CTA policy, Testing/Assessment: Standardized Testing of Students, p. 376

<sup>19</sup> CTA policy, Testing/Assessment: Student Performance, p. 378

There is an assumption that test-taking and test preparation have no intrinsic instructional value and, further, that standardized tests are separate from and contribute nothing to the instructional plan of a school.

CTA staff from the Assessment and Testing Committee spoke briefly to the two members who submitted the NBI. Their ultimate desire is that CTA sponsor legislation that will pull California out of the SBAC – in favor of developing a state assessment. Tests developed by state education agencies themselves require far more time than do those purchased from commercial vendors. There are several large functions involved in assessment contracting not contemplated by their idea:

- *Startup development*
- *Ongoing development*
- *Preparing students to take the test*
- *Training others or getting trained to administer the test*
- *Administering or overseeing the administration of the test*
- *Training others or getting trained to score the test*
- *Scoring or overseeing the scoring of the test*
- *Collecting, sorting, and mailing the completed tests*
- *Analyzing or reporting the results*
- *Miscellaneous*

Of all these functions, the preparation of students is the singular function which causes the greatest angst among educators. *According to the makers of the NBI, while the teachers are busy with the administrivia of the test – giving instructions, administering/monitoring the test – they are not teaching. So the existence of the test wastes their time.*

This NBI links the implementation of the CCSS (and therefore all components of curriculum and instruction) as a critical cost of the test: The State has adopted common core standards, updated curricular frameworks, professional development modules, supplemental instructional materials, and is working on an adoption of mathematics instructional materials. School districts have been required to provide instruction on the common core standards for three years, and have spent resources to do so. Further, the 2013 Budget Act appropriates \$1.2 Billion for common core activities, contingent on development of a local plan on the expenditure of funds. California could halt or slow the transition to common core-aligned assessments, but without assessments aligned to the common core standards pupils, will be taught one set of standards, yet take assessment aligned to prior standards. Our policy connects implementation of new curriculum with a plan for aligning assessments. The state's decision to suspend the computation of a new API (per AB 484) allows full attention to implementation of the common core state standards that is aligned to a thoughtful transition to a new assessment system.