

**JACK O'CONNELL**

State Superintendent of  
Public Instruction

PHONE: (916) 319-0800



CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

1430 N STREET  
SACRAMENTO, CA  
95814-5901

July 20, 2007

Kerri L. Briggs, Assistant Secretary  
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Suite 3C147  
Washington, DC 20202-6100

Dear Dr. Briggs:

As indicated in California's letter dated July 13, 2007, to the U.S. Department of Education, I have enclosed a detailed plan and timeline for addressing the findings of the independent alignment studies conducted on our assessments. I hope that you find this satisfactorily addresses finding "5-Alignment."

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 319-0794.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gavin Payne".

GAVIN PAYNE  
Chief Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction

GP/mc  
Enclosure

## California's Plan and Timeline for Evidence Relating to Alignment July 20, 2007

### Peer Review Finding:

1. A plan and a timeline to address the specific findings of the alignment studies for the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE), the California Standards Tests (CSTs), and the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA).

### Findings of Alignment Studies:

1. Alignment Study Finding:  
Review the cognitive requirements (depth-of-knowledge) of the CST assessment items and the content standards to establish greater consistency. This recommendation 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.

#### Corrective Action:

Under the direction of the CDE, the test developer will transition from the use of various cognitive taxonomies to Webb's depth-of-knowledge (DOK) taxonomy. The test developer will integrate the DOK information gathered during item development and confirmed by content review panels in the item development and review process. The test developer will consider the availability of items by DOK and content strand when developing future item development plans to ensure sufficient coverage of higher-order items.

#### Timeline:

- June 2007: STAR Technical Advisory Group meeting, discussion of this finding and the proposed solution.
- Beginning August 2007: Current field test items will have DOK levels assigned by test developer.
- Beginning November 2007: Item writers use the DOK taxonomy when developing new test items.
- Beginning March 2008: Assessment Review Panel (ARP) members review assigned DOK level during the normal course of item reviews.
- March 2008: Evidence submission to ED consisting of ARP meeting materials (such as an agenda) that documents DOK levels were reviewed as part of DOK meeting.

- Beginning August 2008: Test developer will consider the availability of items by DOK and content strand when developing future item development plans.

2. Alignment Study Finding:

Expand the content coverage on the CST assessments to match the breadth of the content expectations in California Content Standards. This recommendation pertains to the mathematics tests for Grades 2 through 5, the integrated math tests, and the history-social science tests.

Corrective Action:

CDE, in collaboration with SBE staff and the assessment review panels, will review the current test blueprints for all CSTs to determine if merging some reporting categories might better represent the breadth of the content expectations of California's content standards. A reorganization of test blueprints would require action by the SBE staff in November 2007.

Timeline:

- June 2007: STAR Technical Advisory Group meeting, discussion of this finding and the proposed solution.
- July – August 2007: CDE and the test developer will investigate the reorganization of reporting categories.
- September 2007: Test developer will provide ARP with draft reorganization plan for their feedback.
- November 2008: SBE action on reorganized blueprints.
- December 2008: Evidence submission to ED consisting of SBE November action, if any, on reorganized blueprints.

3. Alignment Study Finding:

Review the appropriateness of the number of content objectives for the alternate standards.

Corrective Action:

CDE, in collaboration with SBE staff and the assessment review panels, will review the CAPA blueprints for ELA Levels I and II and Math Levels II and III to determine if the number of content standards on the blueprint is appropriate. In addition, it will be determined if the performance tasks would more appropriately address several content standards instead of a single standard. A redesign of the CAPA blueprints would require action by the SBE in November 2007.

Timeline:

- June 2007: STAR Technical Advisory Group meeting, discussion of this finding and the proposed solution.
- July – August 2007: CDE and test developer investigate the feasibility and appropriateness of addressing several content standards with a single CAPA task.
- August 2007: If it is deemed feasible and appropriate, discuss the reorganization of the CAPA blueprint with the ARP.
- November 2007 (if applicable): SBE action, if any, on revised CAPA blueprints.
- December 2007 (if applicable): Evidence submission to ED consisting of any SBE November action.

4. Alignment Study Finding:

Review the cognitive requirements (depth-of-knowledge) of the performance tasks and the alternate standards to establish greater consistency. This recommendation applies specifically to ELA Level I (Reading and Listening/Speaking) and Math Level I (Statistics, Probability, and Data Analysis).

Corrective Action:

CDE, in consultation with SBE staff and the assessment review panels, will review the CAPA performance tasks for cognitive complexity. Under CDE direction, the test developer will target item development to address any determined gaps in cognitive complexity.

Timeline:

- June 2007: STAR Technical Advisory Group meeting, discussion of this finding and the proposed solution.
- August 2007: ARP meeting at which members will review cognitive complexity of the CAPA tasks.
- August 2007: Evidence submission consisting of ARP meeting materials, such as agenda, documenting the review of cognitive complexity.
- Beginning November 2007: New item development begins for CAPA that targets any gaps in cognitive complexity.

5. Alignment Study Finding:  
Review the assessments for Grade 8 science and Integrated Mathematics III for test accuracy due to larger standard errors of measurement.

Corrective Action:

In response to this finding and a small number of students that participate in the Integrated Math III assessment, CDE, with SBE approval, may determine that it would be appropriate to eliminate the assessment. An elimination of the assessment would require action by the SBE in January 2008.

The larger standard errors for the Grade 8 science CST seem directly related to the difficulty of the test items. This issue may be a function of the newness of the assessment and the relatively small number of items that were available from which to build an assessment. In the future, the test developer will target item development to ensure appropriate coverage of the range of performance the test is intended to measure.

Timeline:

- June 2007: STAR Technical Advisory Group meeting, discussion of this finding and the proposed solution.
- August – September 2007: CDE and the test developer will analyze data from the most recent test administration in collaboration with information from the alignment study.
- September – December 2007: CDE and SBE staff will confer regarding the integrated test series to determine how best to proceed.
- Beginning November 2007: Target item development for science to address any gaps in range of performance coverage.
- January 2008 (if applicable): SBE action to discontinue the integrated test series.
- February 2008 (if applicable): Evidence submission consisting of SBE action, if any, regarding the continuation of the integrated test series.

6. Alignment Study Finding:  
Review the number of items assigned to Far Below Basic and Below Basic to distinguish between these performance levels more clearly for each subject area.

Corrective Action:

Under the direction of the CDE, in consultation with SBE staff, the test developer will review the test specifications to determine if the number of

item targets by performance level need to be adjusted to more accurately represent the range of performance the test intends to measure.

Timeline:

- June 2007: STAR Technical Advisory Group meeting, discussion of this finding and the proposed solution.
- September 2007: Test developer provides recommendation to CDE regarding any necessary changes to the test specifications.
- October 2007: CDE determines changes, if any, to make to the test specifications.

7. Alignment Study Finding:

Examine the number of items assigned to the Advanced level for ELA, math, and science.

Corrective Action:

Under the direction of the CDE, in consultation with SBE staff, the test developer will review the test specifications to determine if the number of item targets by performance level need to be adjusted to more accurately represent the range of performance the test intends to measure.

Timeline:

- June 2007: STAR Technical Advisory Group meeting, discussion of this finding and the proposed solution.
- September 2007: Test developer provides recommendation to CDE regarding any necessary changes to the test specifications.
- October 2007: CDE determines changes, if any, to make to the test specifications.

8. Alignment Study Finding:

The CAHSEE English-language arts (ELA) items matched the depth of the content standards to a modest degree.

Corrective Action:

CDE and ETS have implemented a plan to address depth of knowledge gaps identified by the CAHSEE independent evaluator. In general, the plan involves transitioning from the use of Bloom's Taxonomy to the use of Webb's depth of knowledge rating and integrating that information into the item development and review process.

Timeline:

- December 2006: Amended item specifications to transition to Webb's DOK taxonomy.

- Began December 2006: Trained item developers and item content review panels on the assignment of DOK ratings.
- Began December 2006: Store DOK ratings in the CAHSEE item bank.
- Began January 2007: ETS item developers assigned DOK ratings to new CAHSEE items prior to CDE and external reviews.
- July 2007: Following item content reviews, ETS will report the distribution of DOK ratings of the approved items by content strand.
- Beginning November 2007: Test developer and CDE will consider the availability of items by DOK rating and content strand when developing future item development plans to ensure sufficient coverage of higher-level items.