California Department of Education

Executive Office

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# **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** February 15, 2019

**TO:** MEMBERS, State Board of Education

**FROM:** TONY THURMOND, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT:** Annual Report by the Independent Evaluator of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress.

## Summary of Key Issues

As part of the continuous improvement efforts of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) System, the California Department of Education (CDE) contracts with an independent evaluator to provide ongoing review and feedback on aspects of the system. In July 2018, the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) was awarded this contract. Their three-year plan for evaluation activities, the *CAASPP 2018 Independent Evaluation Report*, is now complete, and an overview of the report is attached.

### Purpose of the Studies

The law establishing the CAASPP System includes a requirement for an independent evaluation (*Education Code* [*EC*] Section 60649). The purpose of the evaluation is to support the continuous improvement of the assessments developed and administered pursuant to *EC* Section 60640, recommending the inclusion of “a variety of internal and external studies such as validity studies, alignment studies, and studies evaluating test fairness, testing accommodations, testing policies, and reporting procedures, and consequential validity studies specific to pupil populations such as English learners and pupils with disabilities.” The evaluation also provides critical evidence in support of California’s submission for federal peer review.

The CDE contracted with HumRRO in July 2018 to conduct an independent three-year evaluation of the CAASPP, the second such contract since the implementation of the CAASPP System. The scope of the current independent evaluation is to conduct three research studies through December 2020 and provide objective technical advice and consultation on activities related to the implementation of specific components of the CAASPP System. HumRRO will produce annual evaluation reports that summarize all work completed during the previous year, stand-alone reports for individual research studies, and a comprehensive final report. The first report in this series, the *CAASPP 2018 Independent Evaluation Report*, is now posted on the CAASPP Technical Reports and Studies web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/caaspprptstudies.asp>. An excerpt from the report (“Chapter 1, Overview of the 2018–20 Evaluation Plan”) is provided as Attachment 1. Future reports will be provided to the State Board of Education as they become available.

## Attachment(s)

* Attachment 1: Document Excerpt from the *California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress 2018 Independent Evaluation Report*: Chapter 1, Overview of the 2018–20 Evaluation Plan (6 pages)

# **Document Excerpt from the *California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress 2018 Independent Evaluation Report*:**

## Chapter 1, Overview of the 2018–20 Evaluation Plan

### Background

The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) System continues to be an ambitious and important effort by the state of California to provide feedback on individual student achievement and monitor progress in implementing effective instruction aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics and the California Next Generation Science Standards (CA NGSS). This system of assessments provides the compass to guide individual student learning through implementation and improvement of curricula. The CAASPP System represents a substantial financial investment by the state as well as a significant investment of educator and student time to participate in the various assessments.

California *Education Code* (*EC*) Section 60649 requires the independent evaluation of the CAASPP System, stating that “evaluation activities may include a variety of internal and external studies such as validity studies, alignment studies, and studies evaluating test fairness, testing accommodations, testing policies, and reporting procedures, and consequential validity studies specific to pupil populations such as English learners (ELs) and pupils with disabilities.” The law requires development of a plan to assess independent evaluation activities, and it prohibits duplication of studies conducted as part of a federal peer-review process or by California Department of Education (CDE) assessment contractors. The independent evaluator also provides objective technical advice and consultation on activities to be undertaken in implementing the CAASPP System.

The CDE specified in its Request for Proposals (RFP) that the 2018–20 independent evaluation focus on the following CAASPP System components:

* Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments (ELA and mathematics), required for grades three through eight and grade eleven, comprised of a computer-adaptive test (CAT) and a performance task (PT).
* Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments (ELA and mathematics), optional assessments designed for grades three through eight and grade eleven, available for use by educators from kindergarten through grade twelve to monitor student performance throughout the school year.
* Smarter Balanced formative assessment measurement tools and resources, available in the Smarter Balanced Digital Library.
* California Science Test (CAST), aligned with the *NGSS for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve* (CA NGSS), required for students in grades five, eight and once in high school. The first operational administration of this new assessment will be in the spring of 2019.
* California Alternate Assessment for Science (CAA for Science), serving students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in grades three through eight and grade eleven. The first operational administration of this new assessment is planned for the 2019–20 school year.

The CDE awarded the contract for the 2018–20 independent evaluation of the CAASPP System to the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO). HumRRO served as the first CAASPP System evaluator from 2015–18. Copies of our annual and comprehensive final reports are available on the California Department of Education (CDE) Web page for CAASPP Technical Reports and Studies (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/caaspprptstudies.asp>). The current contract calls for annual evaluation reports that summarize all work completed during the previous year, stand-alone reports for individual research studies, and a comprehensive final report. The annual reports prepared for this contract will include all data analyses pursuant to *EC* Section 60649.

Given the compressed timeline for development and submission of the 2018 report, as specified in the evaluation contract, the contents of this report are necessarily limited. This report begins with an overview of the development of the plans for three research studies, which HumRRO carried out in cooperation with CDE staff and the CAASPP Technical Advisory Group (TAG). The remainder of the report presents the final CAASPP 2018–20 Evaluation Plan in its entirety, as well as several draft data collection instruments developed for the first year’s studies.

An ongoing evaluation is important to ensure that California gets the intended return on its investment in the CAASPP System. The evaluation can provide evidence to demonstrate the validity of intended interpretations of test scores used as measures of student learning relative to targeted content standards, and it can offer recommendations for potentially improving alignment between what an assessment measures and what it’s intended to measure. The evaluation can also provide insight into how CAASPP results are used to improve instruction at the student, classroom, school, local educational agency (LEA), and statewide levels.

### Initial Development

In response to the CDE’s RFP, HumRRO developed a draft 2018–20 Evaluation Plan that proposed our approach to each of the three required studies:

* California Science Test (CAST) Alignment Study
* Impact on Instruction and Student Learning Study, a two-year effort
* California Alternate Assessment (CAA) for Science Alignment Study

The design of the studies was aligned with the theory of action for the CAASPP System, as articulated by the CDE (see Appendix A of the *California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress 2018 Independent Evaluation Report*). The theory of action indicates components of the system should work together to accurately assess student achievement relative to grade level curriculum standards and provide information to educators to improve instruction, thereby improving student achievement. For each study, HumRRO’s proposed Evaluation Plan included the rationale for the study, the research questions to be answered, an overview of the methods planned and data to be collected, and proposed data analyses.

The CAASPP Evaluation project orientation meeting was held in July 2018. During this meeting, as well as during two teleconference calls held prior to the meeting, HumRRO and CDE staff discussed the proposed approaches to the studies. We also discussed possible study variations that, as a whole, could accomplish the goals of the evaluation within the time frames and resources available. The schedule for implementation of each study was considered, both to meet CDE priorities and to coordinate with the timeline for operational administration of the CAST and CAA for Science assessments. Contributing to the discussions were the Director of the Assessment Development and Administration Division and CDE staff representatives from the CAASPP Lead Office; the Psychometrics, Evaluation, and Data Office; the Science Office; the ELA and Mathematics Office; the Interim Assessments, Digital Library, and Systems Office; and the Fiscal Support Office. Educational Testing Service (ETS) staff responsible for the CAASPP components being studied by the evaluation also contributed to discussions at the project orientation meeting.

Based on outcomes of meetings and discussions with the CDE, HumRRO refined the proposed evaluation plan and submitted the official first draft of the 2018–20 Evaluation Plan to the CDE on August 15, 2018, for formal review and comment.

### Technical Advisory Group Review

HumRRO’s 2018–20 Evaluation Plan was included as an agenda item for the September 2018 TAG meeting. Prior to the meeting, TAG members and ETS staff were sent the first draft of the 2018 annual evaluation report, which included the 2018–20 Evaluation Plan. During the meeting, HumRRO presented in detail the research questions, methods, and planned analyses for the CAST Alignment Study and the Impact Case Study. TAG members, whose role is to advise California’s testing programs, discussed and critiqued the proposed study designs, pointing out aspects needing clarification and suggesting possible revisions to consider. Additionally, for the Impact Case Study, TAG members shared their concerns about the feasibility of HumRRO’s planned approach for collaboration with educators, suggesting additional possible incentives to consider for study participants. HumRRO also presented, in brief, the CAA for Science Alignment Study, which will be developed to a greater level of detail when the assessment is closer to the operational phase. Subsequent to the TAG meeting, several TAG members and ETS provided written feedback on the study designs for HumRRO’s and CDE’s consideration. HumRRO addressed the input received from the TAG and ETS in the final draft of the 2018 annual evaluation report.

### Overall Goals and Timeline

The studies included in the 2018–20 Evaluation Plan will provide information about how well specific parts of the CAASPP System as delivered are meeting the intended goals of the program as expressed in the theory of action for the CAASPP System.

Table 1.1 gives an overview of the goals of each independent evaluation study and indicates the year in which each study will be conducted.

Table 1.1 Overall Goals for Each 2018–20 Evaluation Study

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| --- | --- |
| **Study Title and Year Conducted** | **Goals** |
| CAST Alignment Study,  2018–19 | * Evaluate the degree of alignment between the CAST test items and test forms with the California Next Generation Science Standards (CA NGSS). * The CAST Alignment Study Report should guide future item development and provide validity evidence suitable for submission for federal peer review under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). |
| Impact Case Study,  2018–19 and 2019–20 | * Collaborate with and gather extensive qualitative data from a small sample of schools and LEAs (case studies), purposefully selected based on their use of CAASPP components and resources. The small sample will aim to broadly represent the diversity of the state with respect to geographic location, academic achievement, and size (student enrollment), as well as student population characteristics (i.e., socioeconomic disadvantage and English learner status). * Investigate the context and various approaches used by the small sample of schools and LEAs to implement and integrate the components of the CAASPP System to inform instruction and improve student learning. * The two reports for the Impact Case Study will each describe in detail one school year’s findings of the studied LEAs’ and schools’ use of CAASPP components and their impacts on instruction and student learning. The report will document in detail the local context for each case study. A separate sample of LEAs and schools will be investigated each school year of the study. |
| CAA for Science Alignment Study, 2019–20 | * Evaluate the degree of alignment between the CAA for Science test items and test forms with the Core Content Connectors, which are based on the CA NGSS and were developed to form the basis for test development. * The CAA for Science Alignment Study report should guide future item development and provide validity evidence suitable for submission for federal peer review under ESSA. |

Table 1.2 presents a summary list of key activities and milestones for implementing the 2018–20 Evaluation Plan.

Table 1.2 Schedule of Planned Evaluation Activities for 2018–20

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| --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Time Frame** |
| Orientation Meeting with CDE staff: In-person meeting to review all tasks and project timeline and to address questions and concerns | July 2018 |
| Management Meetings with CDE Staff: Biweekly calls to discuss progress, plans, and issues | July 2018–December 2020 |
| State Board of Education (SBE) Meetings: Meet with SBE staff and provide presentations at Board meetings. | As requested, up to two times annually, July 2018–December 2020 |
| Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Meetings: Meet with and provide presentations, including detailed designs, review of progress on studies, preliminary findings from studies, and Evaluation Plan updates. | Three times annually,  July 2018–December 2020 |
| CAASPP Contractor Annual Planning Meeting: Attend meeting to learn of planned updates to the system, concerns, processes, scope, and schedule. | Annually,  July 2018–June 2020 |
| Conduct the CAST Alignment Study and deliver a stand-alone study report. | July 2018–June 2020 |
| Conduct the Impact Case Study and deliver two stand-alone study reports. | Annually, July 2019–December 2020 |
| Conduct the CAA for Science Alignment Study and deliver a stand-alone study report. | July 2019–June 2020 |
| Develop and deliver annual report. | Annually,  July 2018–December 2020 |
| Develop and deliver comprehensive final report. | July–December 2020 |
| Maintain comprehensive plan and schedule for project activities and deliverables. | July 2018–December 2020 |
| Submit monthly written progress reports to describe evaluation progress, plans, and issues. | July 2018–December 2020 |

### Study Designs

The remaining chapters of this report describe in detail the three research studies listed in Table 1.1. Each chapter presents research questions, methods for data collection and analysis, academic literature related to the methods, descriptions of measurement instruments to be developed for data collection, and a schedule of major activities.

* Chapter 2 presents the California Science Test (CAST) Alignment Study.
* Chapter 3 presents the Impact on Instruction and Student Learning Study.
* Chapter 4 presents the California Alternate Assessment (CAA) for Science Alignment Study.