

State of California

Jerry Brown,
Governor



ADVISORY COMMISSION ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Commissioners 2010–2011

Chair

Kristin Wright

January 19, 2011

Vice-Chair

Judith Holsinger

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Jim Woodhead

Michael Kirst, President
State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Fifth Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear President Kirst:

On behalf of the Advisory Commission on Special Education (ACSE), it is my privilege to forward to the State Board of Education (SBE) the ACSE's recommendations regarding alternative means to the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) for eligible students with disabilities. In response to the SBE's request at the September 2010 meeting, the ACSE met to consider and develop recommendations for the following:

Student Members

Michael S. Strong
Kevin-Dat Tuan Vu

Legislative Members

Carol Liu, Senate
Joan Buchanan, Assembly

State Board Member

Yvonne Chan

Office of Education

Dena Wilson

Executive Secretary

Fred Balcom

- The option of using a scale score of 300 (basic) for the Standardized Testing and Reporting program's California Standards Test (CST) in English-language arts (ELA), grades nine through eleven, and the CST in Algebra I as an alternative scale score for passage of the ELA and mathematics portions of the CAHSEE.
- The option of using the California Modified Assessment (CMA) in ELA, grades nine through eleven, and the CMA in Algebra I for passage of the ELA and mathematics portions of the CAHSEE.
- The feasibility of conducting a field-based pilot study of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction's recommendation for Tiers I and II.
- The appropriate use of the remaining funds (approximately \$863,000) allocated by Assembly Bill (AB) 2040.

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On October 14, 2010, the ACSE formed an ad-hoc alternative means workgroup to facilitate additional meetings and focus on these important issues. Workgroup members Diane Fazzi and Stacy Begin met with representatives from the California Department of Education (CDE) on October 27, November 5, and November 30, 2010. The CDE provided additional analyses of alternative passing CST scale scores in ELA and Algebra I for identified students with disabilities, and provided estimates of the numbers of students who would be eligible for Tier I and Tier II based on statistical analyses and exit code data. In addition, the CDE provided the ad-hoc workgroup with a comparison of the test blueprints for the content standards assessed on the CAHSEE and a detailed description of the proposed Tier II pilot study activities.

The ad hoc members thoroughly considered all information provided and presented their recommendations to the entire ACSE membership on December 2, 2010. The ACSE also invited members of the public to comment during a public hearing on this topic.

The ACSE took formal action to recommend the following:

- The option of using a scale score of 290 for the CST in ELA, grades nine through eleven, and a scale score of 269 for the CST in Algebra I, as an alternative scale score for passage of the ELA and mathematics portions of the CAHSEE;
- The option of using a scale score for the CMA in ELA, grades nine through eleven, and a scale score for the CMA in Algebra I, as an alternative scale score for passage of the ELA and mathematics portions of the CAHSEE. The ACSE recommends that equivalency scale scores be established for the CMA as soon as possible following the SBE's approval of performance levels for these examinations;
- The ACSE finds a field-based pilot study for Tier II to be feasible; and
- The ACSE finds that using the remaining funds (approximately \$863,000) allocated by AB 2040 for the work of the Tier II pilot study is appropriate.

In conclusion, the ACSE strongly believes that there are a number of students with disabilities that have attained the same level of academic achievement as that required for passage of the CAHSEE, but have been unable to demonstrate it using traditional means such as standardized tests. Hence, the ACSE supports the development of an alternative means to the CAHSEE that will allow students with disabilities the opportunity to demonstrate the same level of academic achievement as required for passage of the CAHSEE.

The ACSE believes that the pilot study will provide important information necessary to the development of a statewide alternative means, and encourages the SBE to approve the immediate implementation of the Tier II pilot study activities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'KW', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kristin Wright, Chair

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Advisory Commission on Special Education

cc: Members, State Board of Education
Members, Advisory Commission on Special Education
Deborah V.H. Sigman, Deputy Superintendent, Curriculum, Learning, & Assessment
Branch
Rachel L. Perry, Director, Assessment and Accountability Division
Fred Balcom, Director, Special Education Division