

California Department of Education

Executive Office

SBE-003 (REV. 11/2017)

imb-adad-nov20item02

# California State Board of Education November 2020 Agenda Item #06

## Subject

California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress System and English Language Proficiency Assessments for California: Determination of the Release of Up to 10 Percent Withheld for the 2019–2020 Educational Testing Service Contract.

## Type of Action

Action, Information

## Summary of the Issue(s)

The California Assessment System contract with Educational Testing Service (ETS), comprised of California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC), was approved by the California State Board of Education (SBE) on November 9, 2018. The contract specifies that on or before the annual November SBE meeting, the California Department of Education (CDE) shall present to the SBE a recommendation regarding the performance of ETS in complying with the terms and conditions of the contract for the prior school-year test administration.

Per California *Education Code* (*EC*) Section 60643, the CDE must withhold 10 percent from progress payments invoiced for each component task. The CAASPP contract establishes the process and criteria by which the CDE recommends, and the SBE approves, the annual release of the 10 percent withheld from progress payments.

The contractual California Assessment System completion criteria component tasks are provided in Attachment 1.

## Recommendation

The CDE recommends releasing an amount of $10,200,553.50 from the California Assessment System funds withheld during the 2019–2020 test administration for the successful completion of component tasks as stated within the contract Scope of Work (SOW). The CDE recommends not releasing $119,807.41 to the contractor specific to component *Task 8: Scoring and Analysis* and *Task 9: Reporting,* as described in this item. The amount details per task are listed in Attachment 2.

## Brief History of Key Issues

The SOW encompasses both the CAASPP and the ELPAC. The SOW describes the activities, assumptions, and requirements to manage and administer the California assessment system for the 2018–2019, 2019–2020, 2020–2021, and 2021–2022 school years.

The CDE has reviewed the performance of ETS in complying with the California assessment system contract and determined that ETS has satisfactorily performed contract component tasks 1 through 7 of the SOW during the 2019–2020 test administration to date, pending completion of all contract requirements through December 2020. Therefore, the CDE is recommending approval of the 10 percent release for those tasks. Descriptions of the contract tasks are in Attachment 2.

However, in the CDE’s review of ETS’s compliance with California assessment system contract component tasks 8 and 9 activities, the CDE determined that ETS did not satisfactorily perform all portions of those contract components included in the outline below. The CDE and ETS have met to resolve errors in the 2018–19 test administration and activities continuing into the 2019–2020 fiscal year. ETS has put into action corrections intended to ensure success in the future.

Details of this issue were provided to the SBE in the February 2020 Information Memorandum, Notification and Update on Grade Six Scoring and Reporting (available at <https://cde.ca.gov/be/pn/im/documents/feb20memoadad03.docx>).

### Task 8: Scoring

The CDE recommends the release of $1,765,970.77 of the 10 percent withhold for task 8 related to work scoring procedures that the CDE requires for the CAASPP and ELPAC, as specified in the SOW.

The CDE also recommends the non-release of $92,945.83 of the 10 percent withhold for task 8. This is because ETS did not satisfactorily put in place the quality assurance processing of sample data through an end-to-end sequence to verify the accuracy of the scoring process.

Specifically, students who take the CAASPP Smarter Balanced English language arts/literacy (ELA) assessment receive one writing extended response (WER) prompt as part of a performance task section of the test. The WER prompts are constructed-response items that are randomly assigned to students, and each is scored on three dimensions: (1) purpose/organization; (2) evidence/elaboration or development elaboration; and (3) conventions (COV). ETS recognized in early December 2019 that, within the pool of grade six WER items, six automated-scored WER prompts had low inter-rater reliability (IRR) estimates for the COV dimension scores. The details regarding this component task within task 8 include the following:

#### **8.1.A. Methods of Scoring**

ETS is required to utilize all necessary scoring methods for item types, including:

**Constructed-response Item Scoring.** Constructed-response items require students to provide written responses, from simple fill-in-the-blank items with comprehensive lists of possible answers to full essay responses. Scoring approaches for these items generally fall into three categories:

* + **Deterministic Scoring.** This includes machine-scored items, basic technology enhanced items (e.g., matching items, hot spots), or simple fill-in-the-blank items with comprehensive lists of possible answers.
  + **Human-scored Responses.** As the name suggests, these items involve constructs that require human scoring.
  + **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Scoring.** ETS has developed rater engines that make it possible to automatically score more complex constructed-response items. AI scoring often requires some level of human scoring to train the scoring engine and validate the scores.

ETS regularly analyzes IRR statistics to verify scoring consistency between responses that are automatically scored and hand-scored. With ETS’s review and analysis of all data transfer and scoring systems, a configuration issue was uncovered in the data transfer system related to the pool of grade six WER items. ETS discovered that extra characters were erroneously added to student responses during the data transfer while they were being processed for scoring and reporting. Because characters included punctuation marks, and punctuation is part of the COV scoring, the COV dimension score was impacted and explained in February and June 2020 memoranda.

### Task 9: Reporting

The CDE recommends the release of $510,369.93 of the 10 percent withhold for task 9 related to the full range of reports and reporting formats that the CDE requires for the CAASPP and ELPAC, as specified in the SOW.

The CDE also recommends the non-release of $26,861.58 of the 10 percent withhold for task 9. This is because ETS did not satisfactorily put in place quality controls that would have provided accurate student results for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments, including scores for the claims, target, and WER dimensions. Details for this component task within task 9 include the following:

#### **9.1. Reporting to Local Educational Agencies**

ETS implements a comprehensive and secure Online Reporting System for interactive reporting to allow users to view summative assessment reports at the LEA, school, and student levels. The individual student report outlines student performance on the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments in a static version supported by text.

Although ETS successfully administered most of the requirements of the SOW for this task, the error in WER scoring resulted in a miscalculation that had been reported to local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and parents and guardians. Once the scoring error was discovered, revised Smarter Balanced ELA scores were reported for all students whose scale score increased because of rescoring. Consistent with past practice, students whose scale score decreased or remained the same were not re-reported; those students’ scores were not impacted. ETS absorbed the cost related to the rescoring and reporting, including providing revised Student Score Reports to parents and guardians.

Revised data files were provided to the CDE Analysis, Measurement, and Accountability Reporting Division (AMARD) for further analysis in order to determine the impact of the issue on the accountability and continuous improvement system. AMARD determined that the revised grade six ELA scores resulted in a change to the ELA performance level color of 200 schools and 40 LEAs.

The California School Dashboard was updated on April 6, 2020, to reflect the revised ELA academic performance level for each impacted school and LEA. Consistent with the Student Score Reports, no schools or LEAs experienced a change that negatively affected their ELA academic performance level. Only the LEAs that experienced a change in their performance level were notified of this change. While this update resulted in no change regarding Differentiated Assistance for LEAs, six schools were exited from Comprehensive Support and Improvement as a result of this correction.

To prevent a similar issue from occurring in the future, ETS’s corrective action review has identified the following process-improvement opportunities, which are to be implemented moving forward:

* Update quality-control processes, including the increased sampling of test data and the enhancement of end-to-end data flow testing and rating validations, in an effort to detect and address issues before scoring commences.
* Enhance the preliminary item analysis process for all tests with centralized hand scoring (the Smarter Balanced Assessments for ELA and mathematics, the California Science Test, and the Summative ELPAC) to ensure that any potential issues are flagged earlier in the process, prior to the release of score reports.

The CDE provided an update on the grade six scoring and reporting to the SBE in a June 2020 Information Memorandum (available at <https://cde.ca.gov/be/pn/im/documents/memo-imb-adad-jun20item01.docx>), which provides details of the issue affecting component task 9 to support the recommendation to not release a portion of withheld funds for this task.

## Summary of Previous State Board of Education Discussion and Action

In June 2020, the CDE provided the SBE with an update on the revised scores for some of the grade six WERs for the 2018–2019 CAASPP Smarter Balanced ELA test and subsequent changes to the California School Dashboard (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/pn/im/documents/memo-imb-adad-jun20item01.docx>).

In February 2020, the CDE provided notification of an error with the scoring and reporting of the grade six WERs for the 2018–2019 CAASPP Smarter Balanced ELA test and the CDE’s decision for remediation and communication plan (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/pn/im/documents/feb20memoadad03.docx>).

In September 2019, the SBE approved the release of up to 10 percent withheld for the 2018–2019 ETS contract (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr19/documents/sep19item06.docx>).

In November 2018, the SBE approved the release of up to 10 percent withheld for the 2017–2018 ETS contract (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr18/documents/nov18item15.docx>).

In July 2018, the SBE approved a request for authority to enter into negotiations to amend ETS’s CAASPP contract to include the integration of the ELPAC assessments and enter into negotiations with the University of California, Santa Cruz for an interagency agreement to provide an educator reporting system (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr18/documents/jul18item03.docx>).

In January 2018, the SBE approved the proposed contract renewal with ETS for the CAASPP (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr18/documents/jan18item07.docx>).

In July 2017, the SBE gave the CDE the authority to begin the process of approving a renewal of ETS’s administration contract for an additional two years (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr17/documents/jul17item04.doc>).

In May 2017, the SBE approved the proposed contract amendment with ETS for the CAASPP contract (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr17/documents/may17item02.doc>).

In March 2017, the SBE gave the CDE the authority to begin negotiations with ETS to amend the existing SOW for the CAASPP contract (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr17/documents/mar17item06.doc>).

## Fiscal Analysis (as appropriate)

The funds to be released were withheld during 2019–2020 from invoices paid with existing California assessment system contract funding, as shown in Attachment 2. The CDE recommends the release of $10,200,553.50. The CDE recommends not releasing $119,807.41 specific to tasks 8 and 9. Any portion of the funds withheld during 2019–2020 will revert to the state General Fund and cannot be used for any other purpose. The reversion date for fiscal year 2019–2020 funding is June 30, 2022. The amounts per task are listed in Attachment 2.

## Attachment(s)

* Attachment 1: Educational Testing Service, CDE Agreement #CN150012, Exhibit E: California Assessment System for the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) and the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) Completion Criteria (5 Pages)
* Attachment 2: California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress Contract 2019–2020 Test Administration Component Task Budget (2 Pages)

**Educational Testing Service**

**CDE Agreement # CN150012**

**Exhibit E**

# California Assessment System for the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) and the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) Completion Criteria

The criteria by which the California Department of Education (CDE) will recommend and the State Board of Education (SBE) will determine the successful completion of each separate and distinct component task for payment of the final 10 percent is set forth in the following table for each test administration covered in Exhibit A, Scope of Work (SOW) of the Agreement.

If it is determined by the CDE that a certified deliverable submitted to the CDE by the contractor does not meet all of the criteria in Exhibit E, the CDE reserves the right to use this information as part of the criteria by which the CDE will recommend, and the SBE will determine, successful completion of each separate and distinct component task for payment of the final ten percent for the each applicable test administration as set forth in the attached California Assessment System Completion Criteria.

## CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF COMPONENT TASKS

| **Component Task** | **Criteria** |
| --- | --- |
| Task 1: Comprehensive Plan and Schedule of Deliverables | * The contractor provided all reports, plans and schedules required in the task as specified in the SOW. * All materials, documents, and/or deliverables developed in conjunction with this contract were submitted to the CDE for approval. * The contractor provided the LEA Coordinators with all data, forms, and agreements as outlined in the SOW. * The contractor provided and maintained a secure web-based project management system as specified in the SOW * The contractor delivered all electronic data files and documentation as specified in the SOW. * At the end of the contract, should another vendor be selected as a result of the RFP process instead of ETS, ETS will develop and implement a plan and schedule for transition to another vendor, including the delivery of all California-owned materials, developed specifically for California Assessment System. This will not include any third party or previously developed, proprietary software embedded in the System. |
| Task 2: Program Support Services | * The contractor provided all trainings, focus groups, workshops, and webcasts as specified in the SOW. * The California Technical Assistance Center (CalTAC) provided assistance to local educational agencies as specified, and within the response times specified, in the SOW. * The CDE and LEAs received electronic files and other reports as specified in the SOW. |
| Task 3: Technology Services | * The Assessment Technology Platform meets all system requirements as specified in the SOW. * The contractor provided an identity management system as detailed in the SOW. * Contractor provided and maintained a Project Management Plan as detailed in the SOW * The Assessment Technology Platform supported up to 2 million concurrent users as specified in the SOW. * The Assessment Technology Platform system supported at least 99.982 percent availability as specified in the SOW. |
| Task 4: Test Security | * All test items, test materials, electronic files, data, (including student-identifiable data) were developed, used, transferred, delivered, and maintained in a secure manner as specified in the SOW. * The contractor completed all monitoring (including but not limited to on-site visits, social media monitoring, inventorying of materials) of schools before, during, and after testing as specified in the SOW. * The contractor conducted security breach investigations as specified in the SOW. * The contractor provided the CDE with summary reports of the results of each security breach investigation. |
| Task 5: Accessibility and Accommodations | * The contractor provided all universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations as required in the SOW. * All items developed (as specified in Task 6) include all the embedded accessibility supports, functionality, and render within the test delivery system as specified in the SOW. |
| Task 6: Assessment Development | * The contractor developed for all grades and subjects the number and types of items specified in the scope work. * The contractor pilot tested or field tested the minimum required number of items as specified in the SOW. * The contractor provided high-level test design and blueprints for new assessments as specified in the scope work. * A review of the scaling and equating processes showed items to meet or exceed industry standard. * The performance and achievement level settings generated results for all content areas and performance levels were reported to local educational agencies and the CDE. |
| Task 7: Test Administration | * All test materials required in the SOW were produced on time and in sufficient quantities. * All test materials were delivered to and retrieved from local educational agencies as specified in the SOW. * The contractor hosted the Assessment Delivery System as specified in the SOW. * The hosting systems (TOMS, Appeals, and Assessment Delivery System) were operational and functioned as specified in the SOW, including the authentication of users. * Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments were hosted and scoring provided as specified in the SOW. |
| Task 8: Scoring and Analysis | * All tests were correctly processed and scored within timelines specified in the SOW. * All data analyses were completed as specified in the SOW. * The contractor delivered all electronic data files and documentation as specified in the SOW. |
| Task 9: Reporting Results | * The contractor provided accurate and complete reports of test results to local educational agencies that met all reporting requirements as specified in the SOW. * The contractor provided accurate and complete data to the designated CDE vendor for the California Educator Reporting System that met all requirements as specified in the SOW. * The contractor provided accurate and complete reports of test results for the public reporting Web sites that met all reporting requirements as specified in the SOW. * The contractor met all reporting requirements to the CDE as specified in the SOW. * The annual technical reports were received by the CDE as specified in the SOW. |

# California Assessment System Contract 2019–2020 Test Administration Component Task Budget

The California Department of Education (CDE) recommends releasing a total of $7,719,015 to Educational Testing Service (ETS) from funds withheld during the 2019–2020 California Assessment of Student Performanceand Progress (CAASPP) test administration, as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Recommended Release of Amounts to ETS from Funds Withheld During the CAASPP Test Administration

| **Component Task Scope of Work A** | **2019–2020 Total Test Administration Budget** | **Amount Paid/ To Be Paid from Progress Payments\*** | **10 Percent Withheld (Pending Release)** | **Recommended Release** | **Recommended Withhold (Nonrelease)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Task 1: Comprehensive Plan and Schedule of Deliverables | $8,214,061.90 | $7,467,329.00 | $746,732.90 | $746,732.90 | $0.00 |
| Task 2: Program Support Services | $10,683,290.20 | $9,712,082.00 | $971,208.20 | $971,208.20 | $0.00 |
| Task 3: Technology Services | $11,481,132.30 | $10,437,393.00 | $1,043,739.30 | $1,043,739.30 | $0.00 |
| Task 4: Test Security | $310,051.50 | $281,865.00 | $28,186.50 | $28,186.50 | $0.00 |
| Task 5: Accessibility and Accommodations | $904,921.60 | $822,656.00 | $82,265.60 | $82,265.60 | $0.00 |
| Task 6: Assessment Development | $12,651,427.80 | $11,501,298.00 | $1,150,129.80 | $1,150,129.80 | $0.00 |
| Task 7: Test Administration | $42,921,455.50 | $39,019,505.00 | $3,901,950.50 | $3,901,950.50 | $0.00 |
| Task 8: Scoring and Analysis | $20,448,082.60 | $18,589,166.00 | $1,858,916.60 | $1,765,970.77 | $92,945.83 |
| Task 9: Reporting | $5,909,546.50 | $5,372,315.00 | $537,231.50 | $510,369.93 | $26,861.58 |
| **Totals** | **$113,523,969.90** | **$103,203,609.00** | **$10,320,360.90** | **$10,200,553.50** | **$119,807.41** |

\*Pending the completion of all contract component tasks for the 2019–2020 CAASPP test administration through December 2020.