California Department of Education

Executive Office

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# **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:**  August 10, 2020

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

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

**SUBJECT:** Updates on the California Science Assessments.

## Summary of Key Issues

This memorandum provides information about the release of the 2019–2020 California Science Test (CAST) and California Alternate Assessment (CAA) for Science results, updates regarding the one-year delay for the CAA for Science standard setting meeting and the postponement of the first operational administration due to the suspension of statewide testing, and details about the updated 2020–2021 resources made available to local educational agencies (LEAs) in preparation for the first operational administration of the CAA for Science.

### Results for the 2019–2020 Science Assessments

On March 27, 2020, the California Department of Education (CDE) received a U.S. Department of Education (ED) waiver of Section 1111(b)(2) under Elementary and Secondary Education Act Section 8401(b), which waived the requirement for testing in science during the 2019–2020 school year. The waiver also removed the requirement for California to report results to students, parents, and the public. A copy of this waiver is available for review on the CDE Every Student Succeeds Act web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/es/>. Although the requirement to report results for the 2019–2020 administration was waived, the CDE has provided LEAs with Student Score Reports (SSRs) for the students who submitted a CAST assessment and preliminary indicators (i.e., percent correct and indicator categories) for students who submitted all four of the CAA for Science performance tasks (PTs). The following sections provide details regarding the release of these results.

#### California Science Test Results

Only students in grades five, eight, or high school (i.e., grade ten, eleven, or twelve) who submitted the CAST have received an SSR for their 2019–2020 results. In July 2020, LEAs received a downloadable student score extract file in the Test Operations Management System (TOMS) with student scale scores for the students who submitted the CAST. For the students who started testing but did not submit the assessment, the file contains the number of items attempted.

#### California Alternate Assessment for Science Results

The suspension of California summative assessments affected both the timeline for implementing the first operational CAA for Science and reporting for the 2019–2020 CAA for Science student results.

The CDE delayed the August 2020 CAA for Science standard setting and the first operational administration by one year due to the 2019–2020 suspension of testing. More information on these delays can be found in the July 2020 California State Board of Education (SBE) Agenda Item, located at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr20/documents/jul20item05.docx>**.** The first operational administration now is scheduled to begin on September 8, 2020, and the CAA for Science standard setting meeting will take place in August 2021. Following the standard setting, the CDE will seek the approval of the recommended threshold scores from the SBE in November 2021.

California reported preliminary indicators, consisting of a percent correct score and a category description, for the 2019–2020 CAA for Science results for those students who submitted all four of the CAA for Science PTs. These preliminary indicators are the same as those used to report the 2018–2019 field test results. The CDE created these preliminary indicators after the ED denied California’s waiver to not double test or report individual scores under Title I, Part A, Section 8401 for the California Next Generation Science Standards (CA NGSS) summative assessments in December 2016. More information on the actions taken regarding the federal waiver can be found in the April 2017 SBE Information Memorandum located at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/pn/im/documents/memo-dsib-adad-apr17item01.doc>. The CDE updated the Preliminary Indicator Toolkit web pages to assist LEAs in understanding and communicating these results. These web pages include key messages, assessment timelines, frequently asked questions, and an optional parent and guardian letter template for LEAs to use. The Preliminary Indicator Toolkit web page can be found at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ca/prelimindicatortoolkit.asp>.

Eligible students in grades five, eight, and high school (i.e., grade ten, eleven, or twelve) who submitted all four embedded PTs received a preliminary indicator for the 2019–2020 CAA for Science results. In July 2020, LEAs received a downloadable student score extract file in TOMS with preliminary indicators for those students who submitted all four of the CAA for Science PTs, and for those students who started testing but did not submit the assessment, the file contains the number of items attempted.

#### Meeting the High School Science Requirement

In March 2016, the SBE approved the grades in which the science assessments will be administered. With this approval, the SBE did not specify a high school grade (i.e., ten, eleven, or twelve) in which the science assessments should be administered; it should be noted, however, that high school students are given one opportunity to take a science assessment.

In 2019–2020, high school students met the California science requirement if they submitted the test, received a parent/guardian exemption, or were designated with an exemption from testing due to medical emergency. However, students in grade ten or eleven who did not submit the CAST or the CAA for Science will need to take one of these assessments by the end of grade twelve to meet the California high school science requirement.

All 2019–2020 grade twelve students have met the California science requirement irrespective of whether they tested or not. Therefore, if a student repeats grade twelve, that student will be ineligible to take the CAST or the CAA for Science during the 2020–2021 school year or any subsequent administration year.

### Preparation for the California Alternate Assessment for Science First Operational Administration

The CAA for Science is an online assessment administered to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities whose individualized education program indicates the use of an alternate assessment. Test examiners (TEs) administer the CAA for Science to students one on one. Eligible students take the assessment in grades five and eight and one time in high school (i.e., grade ten, eleven, or twelve).

The 20202021 first operational CAA for Science will become available for TEs to administer to students beginning on September 8, 2020. It will remain available through the end of the school’s instructional calendar or July 15, 2021, whichever comes first. TEs will administer four embedded PTs that are derived from each of the three CA NGSS science domains (i.e., Earth and Space Sciences, Life Sciences, and Physical Sciences). Three of the embedded PTs, one from each science domain, will be operational. The fourth embedded PT will be used for field-testing purposes and will be randomly selected from one of the three science domains. The CDE recommends that TEs administer the embedded PTs shortly after instructing students on the science content throughout the course of the year and not wait to administer all four PTs at the end of the school year.

The CDE is currently developing a contingency plan for administering the CAA for Science should distance learning continue beyond September 2020. The CDE will provide the SBE with updates as more information becomes available.

In preparation for the first operational CAA for Science administration, resources have been developed to assist LEAs in planning and administering the assessment. These resources are described in the following sections.

#### California Alternate Assessment for Science Test Examiner Tutorial

The 2020–2021 “CAA for Science Test Examiner Tutorial” became available in August 2020 and can be found at <https://www.brainshark.com/ets/vu?pi=zGHzcb0JGzJ0cZz0>. This annually updated tutorial includes important information that TEs need for administering the CAA for Science. Throughout the tutorial, participants answer key questions in order to proceed through the training. After successfully completing the tutorial, participants receive a certificate of completion and are ready to administer the 2020–2021 CAA for Science.

#### California Alternate Assessment for Science Practice and Training Tests

To assist educators and students in preparing for the 2020–2021 administration, the practice and training PTs are available on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) website at <http://www.caaspp.org/practice-and-training/index.html>. The training test includes only one PT, and the practice tests consist of three PTs per grade level—one for each of the CA NGSS science domains. The purposes of the training PT are to help students become familiar with the types of questions they will be asked on the CAA for Science and provide them with an opportunity to interact with the technology. The purpose of the practice tests is to help students become familiar with the format of the assessment and the type of science content in each domain included on the assessment. On September 8, 2020, the practice tests will be refreshed to include two Science Connectors for each PT to align with the structure of the operational assessment.

Also available are the CAA for Science practice test scoring guides—for grades five and eight and high school—to further aid the field in preparing for the assessment. The scoring guides can be found on the Test Administrator and Test Examiner Resources for the Online Practice and Training Tests web page at <http://www.caaspp.org/ta-resources/practice-training.html>. The main purpose of the scoring guide is to provide details about the Science Connectors and the assessment targets (i.e., Focal Knowledge Skills and Abilities and Essential Understandings) assessed in each of the PTs and the correct answers.

#### California Alternate Assessment for Science Administration Planning Guides

The *2020**21 CAA for Science Administration Planning Guides* have been posted on the CAA for Science Administration Planning Guides web page on the CAASPP website at <http://www.caaspp.org/administration/about/caa/caa-for-science-administration-planning-guide.html>. Schools are assigned to one of four versions, and all grade levels within a school have the same version assignment. LEAs can locate their version assignments by county/district/school code at <http://www.caaspp.org/administration/about/caa/caa-science-assignments.2020-21.html>. These guides provide LEAs and TEs with the following:

* Basic information on the administration of the CAA for Science and test security
* The Science Connectors being assessed and what to consider when deciding the best time to administer a CAA for Science PT to a student
* A schedule planner template to assist in deciding when to administer each PT

The CDE has provided this important resource to LEAs in advance of the 20202021 instructional year to give teachers and TEs as much time as possible to plan how best to integrate each of the four embedded PTs into their instructional calendars. This document also reminds LEAs that the embedded PTs can be administered to students at any time and in any order throughout the school year. However, it is advisable to do so as close to the time of instruction as possible and not wait to administer them all at the end of the school year.

## Attachment(s)

None.