



CALIFORNIA'S ADVOCATE FOR HIGH QUALITY SCIENCE EDUCATION

November 16, 2016

Dr. Michael Kirst
President
California State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Suite #5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Tom Torlakson
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
California Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5901

Re: Every Student Succeeds Act Waiver Request: Double Testing of Science Requirement and Temporary Suspension of Student Score Reports - Science

Dear President Kirst and Superintendent Torlakson:

On behalf of the 3,000+ members of the California Science Teachers Association (CSTA), we strongly and fully support the California Department of Education's revised federal waiver request to:

- Suspend administration of the statewide summative science assessments (commonly known as the CST/CAPA/CMA in science) beginning with the 2016-2017 school year.
- Pilot and field test new science assessments in grades 5, 8, and high school beginning with the 2016-2017 school year.
- Not report individual student scores and only report participation rates for the pilot and field tests of the new California Science Test (CAST) and California Alternate Assessment-Science (CAA-Science) in school years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, with a third suspension year of 2018-2019 for the alternate assessment.

The reasons for our support are many and are based on what is best for California's students and their science education in order to prepare them for success in college and career in the 21st century.

CSTA Supports the Suspension of Outdated Science Assessments

Our new state standards for science require a much different approach to the teaching and learning of science than our previous standards. The implementation of new education standards is a multi-year, multi-step process that requires appropriate supports and actions in order to be successful (as outlined in California's NGSS Systems Implementation Plan:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/sc/documents/scienceimplementationplan120214.pdf>). Since California adopted new standards for science in 2013, schools and teachers all over the state have begun to incorporate the new standards into their science classes. The state and other support providers have offered professional learning experiences for teachers, and on November 10, 2016 the California State Board of Education adopted a new *California Science Curriculum Framework*. Professional learning and



new curriculum are just two important components of new standards implementation, a third and equally important component is the successful development and administration of new state-wide science summative assessments.

The administration of an outdated science assessment, aligned to our old standards, does not support the high-quality teaching and learning of science our new standards require. In addition, the administration of an assessment that is not consistent with what students are learning is unfair and unjust for students, and would do harm to the implementation efforts currently underway in classrooms across the state. Furthermore, instructional time is one of the scarcest and most valuable resources in our classrooms. Suspending the administration of the old assessment while the state administers pilot and field tests of the new assessment not only makes sense from a logistical standpoint, but also prevents the loss of instructional time spent on participating in assessments, particularly old assessment that are not aligned with what students are learning.

CSTA Supports the Statewide Administration of Pilot and Field Tests for Science

The utilization of pilot and field testing represents an essential component for developing new and improved assessments, as they allow both the state and its testing contractors to ensure that the assessment items represent accurate measurements of student achievement. The timeline for pilot and field testing these new assessments is quick, however it strikes the right balance between the appropriate amount of time to develop a new and innovative assessment and the need to offer students, teachers, and parents the information they need about student learning in science.

CSTA Supports Participation Rate Reporting and the Suspension of Score Reports

The calculation of student score reports during pilot and field testing is not only impossible, it would also be inappropriate. The purpose of these tests are to ensure the state has the capacity and infrastructure to administer this new type of assessment and to evaluate the validity and utility of test items and make improvements to those items. These pilot and field tests are a test of our systems, infrastructure, and the test items themselves, not a test of student achievement. Therefore it is wholly appropriate to refrain from issuing score reports and track and report only participation rates for the pilot and field testing years.

The CDE's revised federal waiver request as described above is what is right for California, its students and teachers, and supports implementation of our new state standards for science.

Sincerely,

Lisa Hegdahl
President

cc: John B. King, Jr., Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
Ann Whalen, Sr. Advisor to the Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S.
Department of Education