

Date of Hearing: April 26, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair
AB 1035 (O'Donnell) – As Amended April 19, 2017

SUBJECT: Pupil assessments: interim assessments: content standard reporting

SUMMARY: Requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to ensure that results from interim assessments are reported in a manner that is useful to teachers in informing their instruction, requires the development of interim assessments for grades K-2, and prohibits the use of data from interim assessments for high-stakes purposes. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Deletes the requirement that interim and formative assessment tools required to be provided by the CDE be acquired by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.
- 2) Requires that the interim assessments be designed for the purpose of providing timely feedback to teachers which they may use, in combination with other sources of information they have about their students' progress, to continually adjust instruction to improve learning.
- 3) Requires that score reports from interim assessments offered to local educational agencies (LEAs), whether produced in hard copy form or reported on any online interface:
 - a) clearly report student scores by content standard, in a manner which allows a teacher to easily and quickly see how her students performed without reference to a key or other guide
 - b) clearly report student scores, organized by content standard, both as individual scores and in the aggregate for a group of students, such as a class
 - c) report student scores as raw scores, by percentages correct, and by achievement level
 - d) rank students by performance relative to each standard so that a teacher may easily and quickly see which students require additional instruction
 - e) identify which standards are considered critical standards or areas, as identified in the curriculum frameworks
- 4) Requires that the interim assessment system:
 - a) provide teachers access to the items on each interim assessment
 - b) provide teachers access to student responses to each item on the interim assessment, including the number of students who chose each answer, and identify the correct answer
 - c) Provide teachers with a direct digital link to practice items to facilitate the customization of assignments for more practice, and to supplemental instructional materials for each of the standards shown.

- 5) Requires that an LEA which elects to use the interim assessments ensure that teachers who administer the assessments have access to the information identified above.
- 6) Requires that all interim assessments offered by the CDE be developed in close consultation with current classroom teachers at each grade level assessed, for the purpose of soliciting feedback regarding the capacity of the interim assessments to provide timely feedback to allow teachers to continually adjust instruction to improve learning.
- 7) Requires, by an unspecified date, the CDE to offer to LEAs interim assessments for grades Kindergarten through grade 2, as required by current law.
- 8) States that the interim assessments offered to LEAs are intended solely for the purpose of providing timely feedback to teachers which they may use, in combination with other sources of information they have about their students' progress, to continually adjust instruction to improve learning.
- 9) Prohibits results from the interim assessments from being used for any high stakes purpose, including, but not limited to, teacher or other school staff evaluation, accountability, student grade promotion or retention, graduation, course or class placement, identification for gifted or talented education, reclassification of English learners, or identification as an individual with exceptional needs.
- 10) Permits scores to be used for communication with students' parents or guardians for the purpose of informing them about a student's progress, any planned interventions, or any home assignments.
- 11) Amends the definition of "interim assessment" to delete reference to the assessments being given at regular intervals, and clarifies that the assessments are for the purpose of evaluating students' knowledge and skills relative to specific standards (rather than sets of standards), in order to provide timely feedback, used in combination with other sources of information they have about their students' progress, for purposes of continually adjusting instruction to improve learning, and produces results that can be aggregated by classroom, course, grade level, and school (and not by LEA).

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), the comprehensive assessment system, inclusive of consortium-developed assessments, that has the primary purpose of modeling and promoting high-quality teaching and instruction using a variety of assessment approaches and item types.
- 2) Defines interim assessments as an assessment that is designed to be given at regular intervals throughout the school year to evaluate a pupil's knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic standards, and produces results that can be aggregated by course, grade level, school, or local educational agency in order to inform teachers and administrators at the pupil, classroom, school, and local educational agency levels. (EC 60603)

- 3) States the intent to provide for both formative and interim assessments in order to provide timely feedback for purposes of continually adjusting instruction to improve learning.
- 4) Requires the CDE to acquire, and offer at no cost to LEAs, interim and formative assessment tools for kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, inclusive, as provided through membership in the SBAC consortium. (EC 60642.6)
- 5) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), the state board, and any other entity or individual designated by the Governor shall participate in the Common Core State Standards Initiative consortium sponsored by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers or any associated or related interstate collaboration to jointly develop common high-quality standards or assessments aligned with the common set of standards. (EC 60605.7)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. The author states, “Interim assessments are tests which teachers can administer during the course of the year to check on their students’ progress and adjust their instruction to meet their students’ needs.

Current law requires the state to provide interim assessments to school districts at no cost, for their voluntary use. For several years California teachers have had access to the interim assessments provided through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). These assessments are a key part of California’s comprehensive assessment system.

Interim assessments have the potential to be highly valuable because they can help teachers adjust their instruction to meet the needs of their students. These are the only state assessments which produce information that can be used during the school year, with a teacher’s current students. Unfortunately, an independent evaluation of the current interim assessments found that they are of very limited use to teachers in informing instruction.

The evaluation found that “feedback in score reports was too broad and had little direct impact on instruction,” and that among teachers and assessment directors surveyed, “major concerns were raised regarding the lack of detailed feedback provided in the reporting.”

A key reason for the limited utility of the interim assessment score reports is that they do not show student performance by content standard. This means that teachers cannot use the scores to determine which standards she should re-teach. For example, a 5th grade teacher who administers an assessment on a block of content called Number Sense and Operations in Base Ten receives a single score representing each student’s performance. But this block of content covers seven standards, and may have taken her six weeks to teach. Because her students’ scores are not shown by standard, she can’t use the students’ scores to determine which standards to review.

Teachers also report that they are unable to view the test items or student correct and incorrect responses. This prevents teachers from conducting the “item analysis” necessary to inform their instruction. If a teacher is able to see, for example, that when her second grade students were

asked to add ten on a number line they instead subtracted ten, she could use this information to quickly and effectively re-teach this skill.

Current law is silent on how the information generated by the interim assessments may be used, leading to concern among teachers that the results may be inappropriately used for high-stakes purposes for their students or themselves. AB 1035 prohibits data from the interim assessments from being used for high-stakes purposes.

By requiring that the interim assessments provide more and better information to teachers, AB 1035 will ensure that the interim assessments live up to the promise of providing information to teachers that will help them tailor their instruction to meet their students' academic needs."

What is SBAC? The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) is an assessment consortium led by 15 member states and two non-state members. The consortium operates on consensus-based governance structure. California's summative (year-end) assessments and its interim assessments are provided through SBAC. The other large assessment consortium, to which 11 states belong, is the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

What are the SBAC interim assessments? The SBAC assessment system has three major components: end-of-year summative assessments designed for accountability purposes, interim assessments designed to support teaching and learning throughout the year, and a suite of tools and resources in the Digital Library that support classroom-based formative assessment practices.

The SBAC interim assessments are provided to California schools in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3-8 and 11. Multiple choice questions are scored automatically at no cost to the LEA, and open responses are scored locally at local expense.

There are two types of interim assessments: Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs) are assessments that measure the same content as the summative assessment. Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs) are assessments teachers can use throughout the school year to focus on more focused sets of related concepts in mathematics and English language arts (ELA). According to SBAC, since the IABs are more granular than the ICA, educators may be better able to administer the assessments during the school year in a manner more consistent with the sequence of their curricula.

According to SBAC, the interim assessments feature:

- Flexible administration options that better support local purposes
- High quality items that are placed on the same scale as the summative assessment and include the full array of accessibility resources that are available on the end-of-year summative assessment
- Ability to be used to measure students' knowledge and skills in grade levels other than their enrolled grades
- A rigorous item bank that covers the range of Depth of Knowledge described in the Common Core State Standards and is non-secure so that educators may access the test questions and their students' responses

Currently, in order for teachers to identify the standards associated with interim assessment test items, they use SBAC teacher guides, which direct teachers in drilling down from claim (a statement describing the concepts that students know and skills they can demonstrate) to target (a description of the evidence students provide to demonstrate understanding) to specific standard.

What are considered key characteristics of interim assessments that inform instruction? In 2007 the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Achieve, and the Aspen Institute published a report titled “The Role of Interim Assessments in a Comprehensive Assessment System.” The report focused on best practices and considerations for the development of an interim assessment system that would inform instruction.

The report noted that two of the key characteristics of interim assessment systems that are to be used for instructional purposes are “clear reporting that provides actionable guidance on how to use the results” and “immediate implications for what to do besides re-teaching every missed item.” The authors note:

Score reports serve to make the results actionable. We recommend visualizing and designing the intended reporting system as a way of clarifying all the information desired from the assessment. Assessments serving an instructional purpose will have different features in their reports than those serving predictive or evaluative purposes. A score report should go beyond indicating which questions were answered incorrectly; it should inform a plan for action to further student learning.

What was California’s vision for the interim assessments? In 2011, AB 250 (Brownley) Chapter 608, Statutes of 2011 required the SPI to develop recommendations for the reauthorization of the state’s assessment system, and in doing so to consider sixteen topics. One of those topics was “providing for both formative and interim assessments, in order to provide timely feedback for purposes of continually adjusting instruction to improve learning.”

The resulting report by the SPI titled “Recommendations for Transitioning California to a Future Assessment System” (2013) noted a strong desire among stakeholders for “diagnostic information to guide instructors in determining what to teach and how to teach it to individual students.” In the report the SPI recommended that the state invest in SBAC formative and tools and the SBAC item bank, noting his intent that these assessments would be voluntary and that no data would be collected at the state level.

This vision became part of California’s current comprehensive assessment system, as authorized by AB 484 (Bonilla), Chapter 489, Statutes of 2013. In that measure, the Legislature expressed its intent to provide “a system of assessments of pupils that has the primary purposes of assisting teachers, administrators, and pupils and their parents; improving teaching and learning; and promoting high-quality teaching and learning using a variety of assessment approaches and item types.”

Use of the SBAC interim assessments in California. The SBAC interim assessments have been available to California LEAs since January, 2015, and the first full year of availability was the 2015-16 school year. According to an independent evaluation of the CAASPP program, during that year 3.4 million Interim Assessment Blocks were administered and 880,000 Interim Comprehensive Assessments were administered.

In support of the introduction of the interim assessments and other parts of the CAASPP system, the CDE has provided web-based resources, CAASPP institutes for LEA teams, interim assessment hand scoring workshops, and Digital Library and interim assessment clinics. CDE also received funding to hire part-time Senior Assessment Fellows who provided trainings upon LEA request.

Feedback about SBAC interim assessments. Current law requires the CDE to contract for an independent evaluation of the state's assessment program every three years. In November, 2016 the Human Resources Research Organization (HUMRRO) published the first evaluation of the CAASPP program, including the SBAC interim assessments.

The report examined a number of issues related to the interim assessments through focus groups and surveys. In its focus groups and interviews, HUMRRO collected feedback from district assessment coordinators, site assessment coordinators, district curriculum and instructional staff, and teachers. Relevant findings from the evaluation included:

- HUMRRO had difficulty finding participants who were using the interim assessments to inform classroom instruction, noting that “Although the study was originally intended to focus on how the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments impacted classroom instruction and decision making about students, it became evident that few, if any, LEAs ... actually used the assessments in these ways.”
- The evaluation identified as a common theme: “Feedback in score reports was too broad and had little direct impact on instruction.”
- “Comments about the limited helpfulness of interim assessments to inform instruction typically related to the content of score reports. Major concerns were raised regarding the lack of detailed feedback provided in the reporting. Due to the broad nature of the feedback (e.g. score level, reporting categories), most participants believed the interim assessments had very little impact on instruction.”
- “LEA CAASP coordinators noted the interim assessments should provide targeted feedback, but teachers did not find the “Below,” “At,” or “Exceeds the Standard” information sufficiently specific to guide instructional interventions.
- “Similar to the LEA coordinators, CAASPP site coordinators noted the interim assessments did not provide detailed results to inform instruction, and the lack of actionable data in the reporting was disappointing to them.”
- “LEA Curriculum & Instruction staff also indicated the interim assessments had minimal impact on curriculum and instruction and noted that teachers often struggle to understand the score reporting. In particular, educators noted the data from interim assessments are not sufficiently granular, leaving them to struggle with how to interpret data and respond appropriately. Specifically, they noted target-level data would be useful and that training on how to use these data would be beneficial.”

Among the findings from the surveys, HUMRRO reported:

- LEA and site assessment coordinators had hoped to use the interim assessments to inform classroom instruction. Of those asked to identify why they were requiring or highly encouraging the use of the interim assessments, 64% and 59%, respectively, answered “inform classroom instruction.”
- The most important change identified as needed by LEA and site coordinators was more detailed score reports (74% and 65% respectively). Teachers did not appear to have been asked this question.
- LEA coordinators indicated that they reported that the least useful features of the interim assessments were in promoting differentiated instruction and determining student course placement. Only 27% responded that they were “very useful” or “useful” in informing instruction, and 26% reported that they were “not useful” in this regard. Site coordinators and teachers responded similarly.
- LEA coordinators expressed widespread concern about the adequacy of detail in results in score reporting (i.e. not reported by standard) to inform instruction. 70% identified it as a major or minor challenge and only 5% indicated that it was not a challenge.
- For unexplained reasons, up to two thirds of teachers answered questions about challenges regarding reporting with the response “I don’t know.” LEA and site coordinators chose this response in far smaller proportion. This may indicate that teachers have not had sufficient access to score reports and other features of the interim assessment system - a concern not specifically addressed by this evaluation but expressed anecdotally to the author of this measure.
- Though the interim assessments are voluntary, HUMRRO found that 48% of surveyed LEAs have made use of the tests mandatory.

SBAC planning to make modifications to interim assessment features. Based on this and other feedback about the limited utility of the interim assessments to guide instruction, SBAC is planning to make a number of reporting and other improvements available in the upcoming school year. According to CDE, planned improvements for Fall, 2017 include:

- Improved score reporting to help identify students’ strengths and areas for improvement, including:
 - the ability to sort by performance level of students, the content standards to which each question is aligned, and which test questions received the highest and lowest scores
 - the ability to view critical information about each test question, including the content standard(s) to which the question is aligned, students’ responses to the test questions, the raw score of each student’s response to a question relative to the total possible score for the question, and exemplars of expected student performance for open-ended test questions
- Organizing and presenting student data effectively to inform teaching and learning, including the ability to create customized student data groups to ensure access to data

in specific classrooms or programs, increased protection for confidential student information, and improved report displays that are easier to read when printed

- Enhanced filters to focus on sub-group performance on tests and “distractor” analysis for multiple choice questions that will indicate the percentage of students selecting each answer option

These enhancements align with many of the requirements of this bill. Staff *recommends that this bill be amended* to conform its content wherever possible to SBAC’s description of planned changes to the interim assessments.

The use of interim assessments for high stakes purposes. This bill states that the purpose of interim assessments is to provide information teachers can use to inform instruction, and prohibits the use of student data for any high-stakes purpose, such as student promotion and retention in grade, teacher evaluation, district accountability, or identification as gifted.

The 2007 Achieve report cited above anticipated the temptation to use this data for purposes for which it wasn’t designed. The authors note:

A particularly important issue in the reporting of interim assessment data is whether and how to make the data public and whether and how to incorporate the data into formal or informal accountability systems. While there is no hard evidence on the best approach, our sense is that the results of interim assessments should be made public within the district (among teachers, administrators and parents) but **should not be used for accountability purposes**. This is particularly true if assessments are to be used for instructional purposes and the goal is for teachers to use assessment results as the basis for conversations among themselves and with their students about the nature of students’ work and the changes in their own practice that are needed to improve this work. For such conversations and analyses to take place, **teachers must believe in – and not fear – the assessment results.” [emphasis added]**

The state’s interim assessments are voluntary assessments which were not designed for the purposes noted above. These assessments are intended to be used to informally measure progress and highlight areas of weakness for teachers to address, not to prove mastery or serve as the basis for highly consequential educational decisions. And as voluntary assessments, they are likely to be used far less frequently if teachers are concerned that this data could be used in evaluation and other high-stakes decisions.

Where are the interim assessments for Kindergarten and grades 1 and 2? In 2013 the Legislature required that interim assessments be provided to LEAs in grades K-12, as provided by SBAC. Currently the only grades for which there are interim assessments are the grades for which the summative assessment is available - grades 3 through 8 and 11.

Kindergarten, first grade, and second grade are key years in the development of foundational skills in English language arts and math. Arguably, the value of interim assessment data is greatest at these grade levels.

SBAC does not provide interim assessments for these grades, but reports that the interim assessments may be used to measure students’ knowledge and skills in grade levels other than their enrolled grades. In other words, the 3rd grade assessment could be given to students in earlier grades if a teacher chose to do so.

But administering a 3rd grade assessment to a Kindergarten student would be highly inadvisable. Asking a Kindergarten student to use the distributive property to multiply or draw inferences from a text through the use of a computer-based assessment, when the student can neither read, nor use a computer, and is just learning to add, would provide no useful information to a teacher, and would likely distress the student.

Developmentally appropriate Kindergarten assessments are typically conducted one-on-one with a teacher or in a small group, with a teacher assigning a task (such as counting a group of manipulatives and writing the quantity) and the teacher recording the student response and evaluating it using a rubric. This is the kind of interim assessment – developmentally appropriate, standards-aligned – that California teachers could use to inform their instruction in these critical early grades. *Staff recommends that this bill be amended* to require that any interim assessments provided for Kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 be developmentally appropriate.

CDE reports that the SBAC members are engaged in a five-year planning process for future work of the Consortium, and that the development of interim assessments in these grades has not been identified as a priority among the SBAC members. This bill proposes to remove the requirement that the interim assessments provided by the CDE to LEAs be those developed by SBAC. This would free the CDE to continue to offer the SBAC developed interim assessments for grades 3 to 8 and 11, or to procure them for another source. It would also allow the CDE to procure assessments in grades K-2 and other grades for which SBAC does not provide interim assessments.

Related and prior legislation. SB 544 (Maguire) of this Session requires the CDE to establish a process for identifying and evaluating locally developed formative assessment tools and other assessments for use by LEAs. The bill also requires the CDE to support a regional network to provide support to LEAs regarding the implementation of the comprehensive assessment tools and resources related to the statewide testing program.

AB 484 (Bonilla), Chapter 489, Statutes of 2013 established the Measurement of Academic Performance and Progress (MAPP), commencing with the 2013–14 school year, as the statewide assessment program for specified pupils, and established the requirement that interim assessments be provided to LEAs at no cost.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Federation of Teachers
EdTrust West
EdVoice

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Tanya Lieberman / ED. / (916) 319-2087