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**State Board of Education Designates ETS
As Standardized Testing Contractor for 2003-2005**

SACRAMENTO – The State Board of Education today designated Educational Testing Service to be the next standardized testing program contractor, tapping ETS to manage California’s Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program for three years, beginning in 2003.

In selecting ETS, the State Board accepted the recommendation by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin to designate ETS over three other proposals, including a submission by Harcourt Educational Measurement, the current STAR contractor. State testing officials anticipate that the new three-year program will cost less than the current standardized testing program, which costs about \$60 million a year.

The STAR program includes the California Standards Tests, which are given in grades 2-11 and are based on California's rigorous academic content standards, and a nationally norm-referenced test, which for the past five years has been the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition or SAT 9.

ETS is widely known for its administration of the Scholastic Achievement Test or SAT I, but it also is the current state contractor for the California High School Exit Exam.

“Today’s vote by the State Board ensures that California will stay the course in crafting a testing system that rightly places the state’s rigorous academic content standards at the core of our instructional system,” said State Board President Reed Hastings. “We all look forward forging a stronger partnership with ETS. ETS is correct to say that testing is a tool that should be used to improve student achievement, and that is a message we will work to communicate to teachers, students and parents.”

In a prepared statement, Eastin also expressed satisfaction with the vote. “ETS clearly demonstrated that they are up to the challenge of meeting the long-term needs of California’s standardized testing program,” Eastin said. “Furthermore, because ETS is the current contractor for the California High School Exit Exam, we will experience increased continuity of standardized testing in our state.”

A key consideration in Eastin’s recommendation and the State Board’s vote are California’s ongoing efforts to implement a standards-based system of education and the continued development of the California Standards Tests, which are aligned to California’s rigorous academic content standards in English-language arts, mathematics, history-social science and science.

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The standards lay out what students should know and be able to do at each grade, and state policymakers have engaged in efforts to align tests, instructional materials and teacher training to the standards. In her recommendation, Eastin noted that the ETS submission was “markedly superior” compared with proposals submitted by the three other testing contractors with regard to the development of the standards tests.

Furthermore, ETS offered a detailed and “consistently substantive” plan to coordinate the California Standards Tests with the Golden State Exams, which are given on a voluntary basis to higher achieving high school students. Finally, reviewers found that ETS had the best ability to effectively administer the program.

Eastin also noted that both ETS and Harcourt included National Computer Systems as the subcontractor responsible for scoring and reporting of the program.

“NCS has been responsible for a major portion of the operational aspects of the STAR program and should be able to provide continuity,” Eastin said in her formal recommendation to the State Board.

Each of the submissions by all the contractors contained proposals for a new norm-referenced test. For instance, the submission by Harcourt proposed using the SAT 10. The submission by ETS proposes using the California Achievement Test (6th Edition), or CAT, as the norm-referenced test.

The SAT 9 has played a key role in California’s school accountability system, serving as the key measurement in the state’s Academic Performance Index or API, the statewide ranking of all schools. The SAT 9, however, is no longer the sole measure used to calculate the API, which in the future will mostly measure schools on how well their students perform on the standards-based tests and high school exit exam.

For instance, results from the English-language arts standards-based tests were integrated into the 2001 base year API, and will be included in the 2002 API growth reports due out next fall. Other standards-based tests and the high school exit exam are scheduled to be integrated into the 2002 API base and reflected in the 2003 API growth reports.

The designation of ETS is on the condition that ETS enter into contract negotiations with the California Department of Education in the next several weeks, with State Board approval likely to come in June.

The State Board took Wednesday’s action to comply with SB 233, which was signed into law last fall and reauthorized the STAR program for another three years, from 2003-2005.

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