California Department of Education

Executive Office

SBE-002 (REV. 11/2017)

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# **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** December 19, 2024

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

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

**SUBJECT:** California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress—Status of Revisions to the Reporting Achievement Level Descriptors and Student Score Reports.

## Summary of Key Issues

This information memorandum provides an update on the outreach conducted in response to the State Board of Education (SBE) request at the November 2024 meeting for additional feedback from parents, educators, and students on the proposed revisions to the reporting achievement level descriptors (ALDs) and labels for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) and Mathematics and the California Science Test (CAST) and the corresponding proposed revisions to the Student Score Reports (SSRs).

In response to the SBE members’ request for additional outreach, the California Department of Education (CDE) is working with the testing contractor, ETS, to gather further feedback from students, educators, parents/guardians, and other interest holders.

## Background

On November 13, 2024, the CDE sought approval from the SBE of proposed revisions to the reporting ALDs and labels for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for ELA and Mathematics and the CAST. In addition, the CDE proposed revisions to the SSRs for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for ELA and Mathematics, CAST, and Initial English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC). As a result of the discussion of the proposed revisions to the ALD labels and SSRs, the SBE members requested that CDE conduct additional outreach to parents, educators, students and other interest holders through focus groups, gather the feedback and provide an update to inform the board’s future discussion.

## Overview of Initial Outreach

The CDE worked with ETS, to arrange a series of three focus groups with students, educators, parents/guardians, as well as other interest holders. The three focus groups took place virtually December 3 through December 5, 2024. The focus group participants included geographic representation from Northern California, the Central Valley, and Southern California.

Two of the focus group sessions consisted of adults and included parents/guardians, educators, and interest holders. One session was conducted in English while the second was conducted in Spanish. Participants in these two sessions identified as parents, educators, community members, and education advocates. Several participants indicated their involvement in parent organizations as well as specific programs or initiatives to help other parents understand SSRs.

A separate focus group session was held for students. The student focus group included participation from elementary, middle, and high school students. Many of the student participants noted that their parents or guardians are involved in education in some capacity, whether as teachers, school staff, or education advocates. A summary of focus group participation is included in Table 1.

### Table 1. Summary of Focus Group Participation

| **Session and Date** | **Number Registered** | **Number Attended** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Session 1 (English session)  December 3, 2024 | 66 | 22 |
| Session 2 (Spanish session)  December 5, 2024 | 55 | 24 |
| Student Session  December 4, 2024 | 21 | 12 |

In addition to the focus groups, an online survey was created and posted on the CAASPP and ELPAC website as well as sent to all registrants for each focus group session. The survey included video vignettes that provided background on the current and proposed ALDs. The video vignettes also explained the feedback sought through the survey. The online survey collected basic demographic information about participants, including whether they have a child enrolled in a kindergarten through grade twelve California public school. Both the initial results of the focus groups and survey, as well as the number of registrants who did not participate in a focus group, revealed the need for additional input from a larger sample of participants.

## Next Steps

The CDE is working with ETS to gather further feedback from a larger sample of participants through an additional series of focus groups. In February 2025, the CDE will provide the SBE with a memo summarizing the feedback and the proposed revisions to the reporting ALDs and labels as well as the proposed revisions for the 2025–26 SSRs for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for ELA and Mathematics and the CAST. CDE will provide an update in an item brought to the March 2025 SBE meeting for information and action on the proposed changes.