
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: AB 1035 **Hearing Date:** June 28, 2017
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Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
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Subject: Pupil assessments: interim assessments: content standard reporting

SUMMARY

This bill requires a local educational agency (LEA) that elects to use state-provided interim assessments to ensure that teachers have access to all information relating to the assessments and student performance on the assessments, establishes parameters for the use of interim assessments, and states legislative intent regarding the information provided on interim assessment score reports.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the statewide assessment system as the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), composed of:
 - a) A consortium summative assessment in English language arts and mathematics for grades 3 to 8 and grade 11.
 - b) Science grade level assessments in grades 5, 8, and 10, until a successor assessment is implemented.
 - c) The California Alternate Performance Assessment in grades 2 to 11 in English language arts and mathematics and science in grades 5, 8, and 10, until a successor assessment is implemented.
 - d) The Early Assessment Program.
 - e) A primary language assessment. (Education Code § 60640)
- 2) Defines "interim assessment" as an assessment that is designed to be given at regular intervals throughout the school year to evaluate a student'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 LEA in order to inform teachers and administrators at the student, classroom, school, and LEA levels. (EC § 60603)
- 3) Requires the California Department of Education to acquire, and offer at no cost to LEAs, interim and formative assessment tools for grades K-12, as provided

through the consortium membership (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium). (EC § 60642.6)

ANALYSIS

This bill requires a local educational agency (LEA) that elects to use state-provided interim assessments to ensure that teachers have access to all information relating to the assessments and student performance on the assessments, establishes parameters for the use of interim assessments, and states legislative intent regarding the information provided on interim assessment score reports. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires the interim assessments to be designed to provide timely feedback to teachers that they may use, in combination with other sources of information they have about their students' progress, to continually adjust instruction to improve learning.
- 2) Requires a LEA that elects to use the interim assessments to ensure that teachers who administer the assessments have access to all information relating to the assessments and student performance on the assessments, which are designed for teacher use.
- 3) Requires all interim assessments offered to 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.
- 4) Deletes the requirement that the California Department of Education acquire interim and formative assessment tools through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.
- 5) Provides that the interim assessments offered to LEAs are intended for the purposes of improving teaching and pupil learning. Results of the assessments may be used to provide timely feedback to teachers that they may use to continually adjust instruction to improve learning, for communication with students' parents or guardians, and for use by teachers in identifying professional development goals.
- 6) 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 and talented education, reclassification of English learners, or identification as an individual with exceptional needs.
- 7) States legislative intent that a score report from an interim assessment offered to a LEA, whether produced in hard-copy form or reported on any online interface, at a minimum does all of the following:

- a) Clearly report student scores by content standard in a manner that allows a teacher to easily and quickly see how his or 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 as aggregate scores for groups of students, such as students in a classroom or enrolled in a course.
 - c) Report student scores as raw item-level scores, by achievement level.
 - d) Sort students by performance relative to each standard so that a teacher may easily and quickly see how students performed.
- 8) States legislative intent that the interim assessment system at a minimum does all of the following:
- a) Provide teachers access to the items on each interim assessment.
 - b) Provide teachers access to student responses on each item on the interim assessment, including the number of students who chose each answer, and identify the correct answer.
 - c) Provide teachers with access to formative assessment tools to facilitate the customization of additional instructional materials for each of the standards shown.
- 9) Modifies the definition of “interim assessment” to:
- a) Strike reference to being given at regular intervals throughout the school year, and instead provide that interim assessments are given during the school year.
 - b) 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 local educational agency).

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “For several years California teachers have had access to the interim assessments provided through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. 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. Teachers also report that they are unable to view the test items or student correct and incorrect responses.”

- 2) ***Interim assessments.*** Existing law requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to acquire, and offer at no cost to local educational agencies (LEAs), interim and formative assessment tools for grades K-12, as provided through the consortium membership (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, SBAC). The SBAC interim assessments are offered in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3-8 and 11. Multiple choice questions are scored automatically at no cost to LEAs, 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. 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.

- 3) ***Evaluation of assessments.*** Existing 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 state’s assessment system, 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 include:
- a) 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.”
 - b) The evaluation identified as a common theme: “Feedback in score reports was too broad and had little direct impact on instruction.”
 - c) “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.”

- d) Local educational agency (LEA) assessments 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.”
 - e) Similar to the LEA coordinators, assessment 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.”
 - f) “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.”
- 4) ***Assembly Education Committee informational hearing.*** The Assembly Education Committee held an informational hearing on SBAC interim assessment on April 5, 2017. The agenda included perspectives and recommendations from researchers, LEAs, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the California Department of Education (CDE). Many of the topics discussed and recommendations made at that hearing are addressed in this bill.
- 5) ***Planned modifications to SBAC interim assessments.*** 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:
- a) Improved score reporting to help identify students’ strengths and areas for improvement.
 - b) 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.
 - c) Enhanced filters to focus on subgroup performance on tests and “distractor” analysis for multiple choice questions that will indicate the percentage of students selecting each answer option.
- 6) ***Why not SBAC-only?*** Existing law requires the CDE to acquire, and offer at no cost to LEAs, interim and formative assessment tools for K-12, *as provided through SBAC*. This bill deletes the requirement that CDE acquire interim and

formative assessment tools through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). The SBAC currently offers interim assessments for grades 3-8 and 11, and has no plans to offer interim assessments in additional grade levels. According to the author, "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." This bill enables California Department of Education (CDE) to acquire interim assessments in K-2 and other grades for which SBAC does not offer interim assessments.

- 7) **Fiscal impact.** According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, this bill imposes minor and absorbable cost to the CDE.
- 8) **Related legislation.** SB 544 (McGuire) requires the CDE to establish a process for identifying and evaluating locally developed formative assessment tools and other assessments, and provide those tools and assessments to local educational agencies for use by educators. SB 544 is scheduled to be heard in the Assembly Education Committee on July 12.

SUPPORT

California Federation of Teachers
California School Boards Association
California Teachers Association
Education Trust-West
EdVoice

OPPOSITION

None received

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