

## **Measuring Student Understanding of the Idaho Core Standards An Alternate Proposal**

### **The Superintendents of the Southern Idaho Conference**

**Vallivue, Nampa, Mountain Home, Middleton, Meridian, Kuna, Emmett, Caldwell, Bishop Kelly, Boise**

### **The Value of the Idaho Core Standards**

The Idaho Core Standards (adopted from the Common Core State Standards) are a set of high-quality, rigorous academic standards that will help us to achieve the Idaho State Board of Education's goal that 60% of Idaho high school graduates have a college degree or certificate of value by 2020.

As our students have increased access to rigorous standards and content, their chances of succeeding after high school improve. By their very nature, the Idaho Core standards paired with locally-written curricula prepare Idaho students for the challenges of accelerated coursework, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Dual-Credit courses and college entrance exams such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). **We support the implementation of Idaho's Core Standards.**

### **Idaho's Participation in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**

To facilitate measurement of students' understanding of the Idaho Core Standards, the State of Idaho joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) as one of 23 governing states. SBAC is a federally-sanctioned organization charged with developing tests in line with the requirements of the Common Core standards.

In 2010, Idaho was given a seat on the Governing Board of SBAC, provided it adheres to the most comprehensive implementation of the assessment - testing at grades 3 – 8 and 11. Even though no current federal or state laws require implementation of the SBAC, the Idaho State Department of Education has mandated the expansion of SBAC testing to include grades 3 – 11.

### **Costs of ISDE Mandated SBAC Implementation**

Three primary costs are associated with the current ISDE plan for SBAC implementation: Monetary, Instructional Time and Computer Access.

1. Monetary: State Department of Education officials indicate that the SBAC will cost no more than the administration of the ISAT. However, if grades 9-11 are not tested with the SBAC, as recommended by the SIC Superintendents, the state will save over \$1 million.
2. Instructional Time: ISDE officials and SBAC representatives estimate that it will take each student 7 - 8 ½ hours to complete the test. Over one million hours of instructional time at grades 3-11 will be lost each year in the state of Idaho just for the SBAC. This is over twice as much time as was taken for the ISAT.

It is also important to note that the required SBAC testing window will conflict with established 11<sup>th</sup> grade college-preparatory coursework testing in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and dual-credit programs. In fact, every day of the final 9 weeks of the 2013-14 11<sup>th</sup> grade school year will be consumed by testing with the SBAC, SAT, and college preparatory testing such as AP and IB.

Additionally, teachers will receive little valuable feedback from administration of the SBAC. SBAC data will provide broad indicators of student strengths and deficits, not the detailed information that is needed to improve student learning.

3. Computer Access: Across the state of Idaho, every compatible computer will be devoted full time to the SBAC during the testing window. Students will lose access to school computers for any non-testing related activities or assignments.

### **Alternatives to SBAC Assessment**

Any test administered to Idaho students must accurately assess preparedness. At this time, the SBAC is an unproven assessment.

The good news is that there are solid alternatives.

1. 11<sup>th</sup> grade SAT

Idaho high school juniors are already required by the state to take a college entrance exam, and cut scores for college readiness have already been established for each of the three subtests of the SAT. In fact, Idaho juniors have twice taken the state-funded SAT, in 2012 and 2013. We already know where we stand in college readiness. We need to move forward in improving our students' preparedness.

Further, the ISDE has also provided funding for the PSAT for 10<sup>th</sup> graders. This assessment will provide valuable input for teachers as they prepare students for college and career.

2. 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade MAP

Also available is Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test. NWEA is a trusted global not-for-profit educational services organization that provides educators with an effective accountability system measuring student learning on the Idaho Core Standards.

The MAP tests take approximately 4 hours per student and provide specific feedback and student growth information for teachers, students and families. Further, MAP tests were used in Idaho in the early 2000's, and provided a solid basis for evaluating student learning.

### **Summary**

**Superintendents of the Southern Idaho Conference support the Idaho Core Standards**, and the increased rigor and emphasis on higher order thinking skills they provide for Idaho's students.

Under the current plan mandated by the ISDE for implementation of the SBAC assessments, Idaho students in grades 3 – 11 will lose countless hours of learning time and opportunities to work with technology. **At this time, we do not support administration of the SBAC to Idaho's students.**

**As superintendents of school districts enrolling over one-third (1/3) of Idaho's students, we recommend:**

- **Postpone administration of the SBAC as the measure of attainment of the Idaho Core standards so that an analysis may be made of the effectiveness and efficiency of the exam for Idaho's schools. Involve school district personnel on a regular basis in this analysis.**
- **In the interim, adopt the NWEA MAP tests in grades 3-8, and the grade 11 SAT as measures of the progress of our students.**