



**Synopsis of Deb Sigman's (CDE) Teleconference
Conversation with Steve Rees (School Wise Press)
of June 7, 2011**

When the STAR era ends, what will take its place?

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TOPICS COVERED:

1. When is the STAR testing era going to end? How will it end?
2. Where is the money coming from to fund the transition to the Common Core?
3. What can district leaders do now to get ready to assess student writing?
4. What can district leaders do now to get ready to test students using computers?

1. WHEN IS THE STAR TESTING ERA GOING TO END? HOW WILL IT END?

The phasing out of the STAR will occur in the 2014-2015 school year. Whichever consortia California joins (the CDE's choice will be announced any day now), the transition will be smoother than we anticipate. There is sufficient time to write curriculum. The analysis comparing the current California Content Standards with the Common Core standards reveals that they have far more in common than not. This will make a smooth transition possible.

2. WHERE IS THE MONEY COMING FROM TO FUND THE TRANSITION TO THE COMMON CORE?

Money for districts to fund professional development, technology, administration and scoring of assessments is likely to come from two sources: existing funding

repurposed for the state assessment program and new funds to be authorized by legislation. Deb Sigman stressed the importance of the pending legislation and encouraged participants to take a look at the following bills now in the legislature: **AB 250** on instructional materials (<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill_number=ab_250&sess=CUR&house=B&author=brownley>), **SB 740** on pupil assessment (<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill_number=sb_740&sess=CUR&house=B&author=hancock>), and **SB 547** on public school performance and accountability (<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill_number=sb_547&sess=CUR&house=B&author=steinberg>).

Deb Sigman discussed the obvious difficulty of funding big system-level changes in an era of financial strain as daunting as this one. However, she affirmed that the harmony among the four parties at the table – the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the governor’s office, the legislature, and the State Board of Education – make a reasonable, thoughtful outcome likely.

3. WHAT CAN DISTRICT LEADERS DO NOW TO GET READY TO ASSESS STUDENT WRITING?

Deb Sigman recommended continuing to teach writing, and she brought attention to the writing prompts that the CDE makes available for the fourth and seventh grade writing assessments. She favored the idea of writing across the curriculum to promote literacy broadly and harkened back to the practice of writing across the curriculum in the 1980s and 1990s. The assessment of writing is likely to involve some combination of computer-assisted scoring and manual scoring.

4. WHAT CAN DISTRICT LEADERS DO NOW TO GET READY TO TEST STUDENTS USING COMPUTERS?

Steve Rees asked how computers will be used beyond using them as a tool for answering multiple choice tests? Will they be used to manipulate graphical objects? As writing instruments? Will computers be used in math tests to allow students to interact with spreadsheets? Deb Sigman answered that all of these are indeed likely.

The hardware and security requirements will not require students to use the same computer for all testing. Having computers clustered in computer labs and having students rotate through the lab may be an entirely feasible proposition.

The CDE has retained a firm to conduct a technical gap analysis to evaluate the current technical carrying capacity of districts.

In addition, the Smarter Balance consortium calls for computer adaptive assessments, which require larger item banks, and intelligent computer coding that can modify the level of rigor of test questions for each student based on that student's pattern of answers. The notion that a test can change as it is being administered to fit an individual's level of mastery is a powerful one. It promises shorter tests that produce more reliable results. It also provides a better test-taking experience for students, who encounter less material that is either far above or far below their level of mastery. The post-STAR era will help bring the benefits of computer adaptive testing to teachers, and it promises to be a big instructional benefit.

-- End of dialogue and start of audience questions --

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