

# CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

1430 N Street; P.O. Box 944272  
 Sacramento, CA 94244-2720  
 (916) 319-0827  
 (916) 319-0175 FAX



February 3, 2003

To: Members, State Board of Education

From: Greg Geeting, Assistant Executive Director

Subject: Item 17, February 2003 Agenda  
 Regional Public Hearings on Performance Standards (Levels) for the  
 California Standards Tests in Integrated Science

Per the State Board's authorization, Phil Spears, Director of the CDE's Standards and Assessment Division, and I conducted (via videoconference) two regional public hearings on the proposed performance standards (levels) for integrated science. We also received several e-mail messages with comments.

Three individuals were present at each of the regional public hearings:

January 28, 2003 <u>Santa Clara County Office of Education</u>	January 29, 2003 <u>Riverside County Office of Education</u>
Dale Russell, Director of Standards and Assessment, SCCOE Sandra Ruehlow, Science Coordinator, SCCOE Laura Kinley, Director of Media Services, SCCOE	Nancy Pavelsky, Science Coordinator (RCOE) Tom Barrett, Director of Assessment, RCOE Joy Peoples, Instructional Services Specialist, Riverside Unified SD

No one who participated in the regional public hearings or submitted comments by e-mail took issue specifically with the proposed performance standards (levels), i.e., suggested higher or lower cut scores. One comment (as noted below) took issue with the specification of "proficient" as being the objective of our education system and the commitment to re-evaluate the "cut scores" following the 2007 STAR administration to study the feasibility of raising them. For the most part, the comments and discussion concerned the revised integrated science CSTs, state testing and accountability in general, the weight of science tests in the API, and the NCLB requirement for core knowledge tests in science at selected grades.

Some of the key points made were as follows:

- Although committed to the concept of integrated science, we have had great difficulty in finding teachers with substantial qualifications in all of the content areas. We have also

had difficulty finding instructional materials for integrated science courses that are consistent with the state's content standards in all of the disciplines. We find it necessary to use several different texts which is cumbersome for teachers and students.

- We are studying the possibility of developing a standards-based earth science course for entering freshmen, then having them proceed to discipline-based courses in biology, chemistry, and/or physics. This would be an alternative to our two-year integrated science course. We believe there may be advantages to staying focused on a discipline rather than “hopping around” among the disciplines during the same instructional year.
- Lowering the contribution of science to the high school API is understandable as a temporary measure given the circumstances. However, the State Board should proceed as quickly as possible (next year if at all possible) to incorporate the results of the discipline-based and integrated science CSTs in the base API. Keeping the API contribution of science at a reduced level for too long sends the wrong message.
- The revised integrated science tests are frustrating in that we had worked long and hard to align our integrated (physical) science course for freshmen to match the initial earth/chemistry/physics integrated science test. We did that because we wanted a substantive, laboratory science course for freshmen focusing on physical sciences. None of the new integrated tests fits our course.
- The State Board should reinstate some integrated science test that does not include biology/life science.
- Test scores (in general) are not valid, because students have no reason to do their best. Until there are proper incentives, the scores are a fraud.
- The “proficient” level is unreasonable, and the idea of raising cut scores after 2007 is absurd.
- This effort puts the cart (performance standards for integrated science) before the horse (solid instructional materials and appropriate teacher credentialing for integrated science).
- It is important for all CSTs to publish exemplars that show the types of questions students must answer correctly around each transition point (i.e., the types of questions that mean the difference between below basic and basic, between basic and proficient, and between proficient and advanced). The State Board should establish a specific schedule for publication of the exemplars.

Cc: CDE Executive Staff