

To: House Subcommittee on Education

Date: March 21, 2013

Speaker: Dr. Tom Foster, Director of Careers Standards and Assessments

Organization: Kansas State Department of Education

Topic: Response as Requested to Fiscal Impact of House Bill 2289

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Overview and History of the Kansas Education Assessment System

State testing has been around for over a century but has changed tremendously in terms of scope, nature, and purpose. Before 1960 state testing was rare, and test results were not shared with the public. They were used primarily by teachers to inform curricular decisions. However, as demands to use student testing for accountability increased, the use of assessment data shifted to include local school districts, state level accountability and public reporting.

In the late 1980s, the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) initiated efforts to improve Kansas education. This effort was in response to concerns expressed by business leaders that students were graduating without the skills needed to be successful later in life. Business leaders were especially concerned that Kansas students didn't have basic problem-solving, reasoning, critical-thinking, and communication skills; and that they were unable to assimilate new and unfamiliar information and work cooperatively in teams

In 1989, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) began developing curriculum standards and assessment tests that would provide a way of assessing students' achievement of those standards. These efforts involved a major restructuring of Kansas schools and what they taught. Instead of ensuring that Kansas students could meet some minimum level of competency, schools now would be expected to ensure that students could meet challenging academic standards and develop higher-order thinking skills, as reflected in the Kansas curriculum standards.

The Kansas curriculum standards were designed to be "world-class." This meant they would be at a level equal to the best standards of any other country, and high enough so that Kansas students could compete in the world economy.

In 1990-1991, KSBE approved the first curriculum standards in the area of mathematics. The process is designed to take approximately two-to-three years. Standards also were developed for reading, writing, science, and social studies. In developing the initial draft standards, department staff convened advisory committees made up of education officials and teachers who were

familiar with national standards in their subject areas. These individuals write the initial draft standards. For each subject area, the draft standards were then sent out for review to teachers, higher education faculty, professional organizations, business representatives, and community members. In addition, the standards were reviewed by a group of experts involved in setting national curriculum standards to ensure they were “world-class.”

Beginning in late 1990, KSBE contracted with the University of Kansas' Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation (CETE) to develop assessments to measure schools' progress toward meeting the new curriculum standards. The first assessment developed was for mathematics. In developing this test, CETE contacted school principals and asked them to nominate teachers to be trained and to write potential assessment test questions for mathematics. CETE then used these questions to develop a pilot mathematics assessment that was first given to students in spring 1991.

Since then, assessments also have been developed for the four other subject areas -- reading, writing, science, and social studies. For each subject area tested, teachers submitted potential questions. Because the focus of these assessments has been on higher-order thinking skills, a variety of formats have been used through the years, including multiple-choice questions, multiple-mark questions, open-ended questions, written narratives, group projects, and extended projects. Currently, the format for all assessments except writing is multiple choice.

The grade levels at which the state assessments were initially administered, and the frequency of those tests, are shown in the table below.

State Assessment Schedule

Subject Area	Grades Tested	Frequency
Mathematics	3-8 and once in HS	Every Year
Reading	3-8 and once in HS	Every Year
Writing	5, 8, 10	Every Other Year
Science	5, 8, HS*	Every Year
Social Studies	6, 8, HS	Every Other Year

*The science test was given in Grade 10 in the 1996-97 school year.

In 1992, the Legislature passed school accreditation legislation that aligned with what KSBE was already doing in the areas of curriculum and assessment. That process -- quality performance accreditation (QPA) -- was to be based in part on curriculum standards that specified what Kansas school children should know by different grade levels. It also was to include an assessment component to assess students' achievement of those standards. Under the law, standards and tests for assessing them were to be developed and implemented at three grade levels -- elementary, middle, and high school.

The 1995 Legislature amended the law to require that the school performance accreditation system be based, in part, upon improvement in performance on the curriculum standards. Information from the assessments should be used to help schools determine their progress at meeting the Kansas curriculum standards. The information should also be used to identify areas

of weaknesses, so that schools can make appropriate improvements in their teaching materials, instruction methods, or other areas.

Projected Costs Factors

The Division of Legislative Post Audit conducted a study on common core standards and estimated that the state could save approximately \$3,000,000 per year by not developing student assessments.

We have consulted with our current state assessment contractor, University of Kansas, who traditionally has been much more economical than other contractors in the nation. Their recommendation was to provide state assessments in two subjects—mathematics and English language arts—in seven grades. There would be 60 to 80 items per form and 50 percent coverage in order to alter the assessments for a total of 6,300 to 11,760 items. Depending on the type of items (multiple-choice versus technology enhanced) and development process (traditional versus evidence centered design), the cost per item is estimated between \$900 and \$2,000.

In summary, the minimum amount for developing, analyzing, and validating the assessments would cost approximately \$9,000,000 for both mathematics and English language arts. There would be additional costs for field testing the items, analyzing the results, and building the test forms which could run as high as \$30 million.

About Smarter Balanced

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium brings together states to create a common, innovative assessment system for mathematics and English language arts/literacy that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards and helps prepare students for college and careers. The Consortium involves educators, researchers, policymakers, and community groups in a transparent and consensus-driven process to help all students thrive in a knowledge-driven global economy. The Consortium's projects are directed by state leaders and funded through a four-year, \$175 million grant and through generous contributions of charitable foundations. Membership is open to any interested U.S. state. For more information, please visit www.smarterbalanced.org.