

Understanding AB 1035

New State Policy Concerning Interim Assessments

AB 1035 (O'Donnell) – Interim Assessments: Content Standard Reporting.

Current law requires the CDE to acquire, through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), interim and formative assessment tools for grades K-12 and offer those tools at no cost to LEAs. AB 1035 requires that state SBAC interim assessments be developed in close consultation with current classroom teachers at each grade level assessed, and to provide timely feedback to teachers for their use so that they may continually adjust instruction to improve learning. The bill ensures that teachers who administer the state SBAC interim assessments have access to all functions and information designed for teacher use.

AB 1035 specifies that interim assessments offered to LEAs are intended for the purposes of improving teaching and pupil learning. The bill prohibits the use of interim assessments for any high-stakes purposes such as teacher evaluation or accountability.

Interim assessments are tests which teachers can administer during the year to check on their students' progress and adjust their instruction to meet their students' needs. Current law requires the state to provide interim assessments to school districts at no cost, for their voluntary use. For several years California teachers have had access to the interim assessments provided through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). These assessments are a key part of California's comprehensive assessment system. 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. CTA members have voiced multiple frustrations about the interim assessments: the lack of flexibility, the strict mandates for use, the lack of access to the test items, the poor reporting on student performance, and even the lack of guidance on how to use the results.

By requiring that the interim assessments provide more and better information to teachers, AB 1035 will ensure that the interim assessments live up to the promise of providing information to teachers that will help them tailor their instruction to meet their students' academic needs

AB 1035 also requires close consultation with current classroom teachers in each grade that will use the state interim assessments. To support that local process, CTA has developed this advisory. Further, CTA encourages locals to work closely with their staff and bargaining specialists to use the consult process.

***From Erin's perspective:** In developing this advisory, the CTA Standing Committee on Assessment and Testing asked Erin Rosselli from the Orange Unified School District to provide comments about the interim assessment process and the promise of AB 1035. Erin has been honored as a California Teacher of the Year; her current assignment in the Orange Unified School District is Teacher on Special Assignment for Student Achievement. She worked for 15 years as a classroom teacher spending the first half of that time as a special day class teacher and resource specialist in upper elementary and the second half as a general education teacher at the primary level. Her passion for technology and assessment led her to a role as an instructional specialist in those two areas. Erin recently stepped into her current role focused on exploring student achievement through the lenses of formative and summative assessment.*

1. What are interim assessments?

The Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments are a part of California’s state testing program called the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). The interim assessments are optional tests that measure what students know and can do using the Common Core State Standards for English language arts/literacy and mathematics.

There are two kinds of interim assessments—interim comprehensive assessments (ICAs) and interim assessment blocks (IABs). More than 120 interim assessments are available for use.

- INTERIM COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENTS (ICAs)
1 per grade level

The ICAs are built on the same blueprint as the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments. Each ICA contains approximately 35 to 45 items.

Interim Comprehensive Assessments (or ICAs) mimic the summative assessment in terms of breadth of content and time required. The ICAs may be helpful for purposes such as determining the knowledge and skills of students who are new to the district or the state, those enrolled in non-tested grades (e.g., grades 9 and 10), and to provide interim information after a significant period of instruction.

- INTERIM ASSESSMENT BLOCKS (IABs)
6–9 per grade level, for grades 3–8 and HS

The IABs focus on smaller sets of targets to provide more detailed information for instructional purposes. Each IAB contains approximately 5 to 15 items.

The Interim Assessment Blocks (or IABs) are focused sets of related concepts in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). Since the IABs are more granular than the ICAs, teachers can administer them throughout the school year more consistent with their curricula.

From Erin’s experience: Most teachers choose to use the IABs, because of their length and focus on specific targets and claims. Results are available almost immediately now, so the teachers have immediate feedback to use when guiding instruction. The IABs are also fantastic instructional tools, because they can easily be broken up into sections. This allows for teachers to work on a section at a time or assign small groups to each section. In addition, based on the results, the teacher may only choose a few questions to review or may ask different students to work on different questions. This is much easier to organize with a shorter, targeted assessment

2. Do I have to use these assessments?

No. The Smarter Balanced website¹ clearly states that the use of these assessments is optional.

The Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments are available for use at any time during the year. The timing and frequency of interim assessment use are locally determined.

AB 1035 requires meaningful consultation with teachers in each grade concerning the use of the interim assessment.

From Erin’s experience: The interim assessments have always been an optional tool for districts to utilize. My district made the decision to use this assessment in grades 3-8 and

¹ <https://www.smarterbalanced.org/assessments/#interim>

high school. Teachers choose the interims that best align with their instruction throughout the school year.

3. What kind of assessments can be used in place of SBAC interim assessments?

While districts are required to use the SBAC summative assessments, the use of the SBAC interim assessments is optional. The state is required in state law to provide the SBAC interim assessments at no cost to districts. There are a number of interim and formative assessment resources available to assist educators in addressing student instruction needs based on the content standards.

With the sunset of the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program, the requirement that students in grade two participate in the summative assessment was eliminated. To ensure that teachers have information about the developing language arts and computational skills of their grade two students, California Education Code (EC) Section 60644 required the California Department of Education (CDE) to gather information regarding existing diagnostic assessments, evaluate that information to ensure that the legal requirements and other criteria are met, and to make the information available to local educational agencies (LEAs).

All costs associated with the use of the optional grade two diagnostic assessments will be the responsibility of the LEA. Additionally, LEAs will be required to contract for those services directly with the identified test provider, not with the CDE. Per California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 862(a)(8), beginning in 2014–15, LEAs will be required to report to the CDE the number of students in grade two who are administered a diagnostic assessment.² A list of those diagnostic assessments is available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/da/>.

CTA also advises all teachers to consider formative assessment supports available in the SBAC Digital Library. The Digital Library contains a variety of filters to assist educators in identifying formative assessment resources that best meet the instructional needs of their students. Among these filters is a “Common Core State Standards” filter which will narrow searches to specific standards within the CCSS.

The Digital Library was first posted with 250 lessons and resources; the content has grown to over 3,000 resources. There are still content gaps but the state and SBAC continue to develop those resources. The Digital Library has collaboration features that allow users to rate materials and share their expertise with educators across the country.

Any California teacher can sign up for the Digital Library. Educators can access the self-registration feature through the Smarter Balanced Digital Library storefront page. New accounts can be created by individual users as long as their e-mail address is affiliated with a known LEA (school district) e-mail domain. Staff with a non-LEA-specific e-mail domain (e.g., gmail.com, yahoo.com) must contact their LEA CAASPP coordinator for assistance creating a new account. LEA CAASPP coordinators are responsible for maintaining current users and registering new users in the Digital Library through the Administration and Registration Tool (ART).

From Erin’s experience: I originally became involved with the Digital Library as a part of the State Network of Educators. At that time, the site had few resources and was difficult to navigate. A great deal of time and effort has clearly been put into the site, because the resources available have exploded and navigation has significantly improved. My district spent time last year encouraging teachers to create accounts to access the formative assessment tools available through the Digital Library. We have

² Required by EC Section 60644

really put a focus on using interim assessments as a tool to guide instruction, with the Digital Library being a tool to turn to based on interim assessment results. Now SBAC has made that easier by including a link to the Digital Library in the Interim Reporting System, where teachers can review their students' results.

4. Does the bill only apply to the SBAC assessments? What can I do about the other interims that my district uses?

Yes. Existing law already grants to local associations the option to demand to consult with districts concerning the use of other assessments.³

In discussing the selection of other interim assessments, CTA's standing committee on Assessment and Testing recommends that local should insist on similar requirements such as multiple reporting formats aligned to the standards, options for non-standardized assessment administration, flexible testing schedules, etc.

5. When this law kicks in will districts immediately be pushed to get info out to teachers and change their IAB testing mandates?

The mandate is AB 1035 is to fully implement the functionality and flexibility of the state interim assessment system with the consultation of the teachers in each grade tested. Although there is no sentence in the content of the new statute that says districts must tell teachers about this policy, the requirement for close consultation requires more than a discussion about the district's decision to use the state interim assessments.

The CDE has an interim assessment planning template available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/documents/plantemplateinterim.pdf>. CTA advises local associations to take advantage of the consultation requirement to ensure that classroom teachers can maximize their choices concerning formative assessments.

From Erin's experience: After discussing this bill with the office of Assembly member O'Donnell and CTA staff, I am thrilled with the intent of the bill to focus on utilizing interim assessments to drive instructional decisions. I feel my district has truly been on the right track with this by providing teacher choice with how the assessments are used and by ensuring teachers have access to effectively view results.

6. How will rank and file teachers get the information on the specifics of the new law?

AB 1035 requires close consultation with current classroom teachers in each grade that will use the state interim assessments. To support that local process, CTA has developed this advisory. Further, CTA encourages locals to work closely with their staff and bargaining specialists to use the consult process.

Locals should explicitly request that districts replicate the training provided in the CAASPP Institute Interim Assessment Training Modules. The CAASPP Institute was an in-person training offered to LEA teams at approximately 20 locations throughout the state during the 2015–16 school year. They provided an overview of the CAASPP system of assessments and included dedicated time for LEA teams to plan for implementing all components of the CAASPP system to improve teaching and

³ Government Code Section 3543.2 of the EERA specifies the right to consult on any subject outside the scope of representation.

learning. The materials from the Institute, as well as accompanying video modules, are available on the CDE Web site and can be modified as needed by LEAs for independent or group learning during subsequent school years.

Seats are still available for both the 2017–18 CAASPP Institute and the Training-of-Trainers Institute. This year’s CAASPP Institute will provide LEA teams with breakout session content tailored to educator roles and responsibilities. Trainings are offered in nine locations statewide and span 2 days. Visit the [2017–18 CAASPP Institute Registration Web page](#) for agendas and online registration.

From Erin’s experience: My district continuously provides support to teachers in regards to the interim assessments. In addition to all the resources provided by CAASPP, our Student Assessment and Educational Measurement team has created many resources to help teachers view, launch, hand score, and review the interim assessments. They have also created an alignment chart to match the interim assessments with the math topics taught in each grade level. Teachers can use this to help them determine which interim assessment to administer.

7. Why would I use the SBAC interim assessments instead of something else?

Assessment has two fundamental purposes: One is to provide information about student learning minute-by-minute, day-to-day, and week-to-week so teachers can continuously adapt instruction to meet students’ specific needs and secure progress. This type of assessment is intended to assist learning and is often referred to as formative assessment or assessment *for* learning.

A second purpose of assessment is to provide information on students’ current levels of achievement after a period of learning has occurred. Such assessments—which may be classroom-based, districtwide, or statewide—serve a summative purpose and are sometimes referred to as assessments *of* learning.

There are some advantages to using the state interims. These tools can help educators better understand what students know and can do, and can help improve the teaching and learning process.

- Flexible administration - The state interim assessments are versatile and can be administered to students in either a standardized (e.g., benchmark) or non-standardized manner or used by school and district staff for professional development.
- Full array of accessibility supports – All state interim assessments include the same accessibility supports as the summative assessments. All students can use these supports. Student can practice using the supports as they use the state interim assessments.
- Aligned with the Common Core State Standards - Covers the range of Depth Of Knowledge (DOK) described in the Common Core State Standards and are on the same scale as the summative assessments
- Out-of-grade level use - The state interim assessments may be used to measure student knowledge and skills in grade levels other than their enrolled grades. For example, you might use a grade 3 IAB at the beginning of the year with your grade 4 students to get a sense of their baseline knowledge about a topic.
- Administered online - Assessments are administered online using the same delivery software as the summative assessments and may be administered multiple times throughout the year.

From Erin's experience: The interims also provide an opportunity to really explore the universal tools designated supports, and accommodations.⁴ While most educators would reasonably be concerned about providing assessment support for English Learners (ELs), students with disabilities, and ELs with disabilities, these universal tools and designated supports are available for use by all students. More importantly, student test results are not automatically invalid or considered "not proficient" when the use of these tools follows the SBAC Guidelines.⁵

8. Right now, the only person who uses the assessment website is the test coordinator. Can I have access to the state interim assessments?

In fact, state interim assessments are available to all California public school K–12 educators. Authorized users can access the state interim assessments through the CAASPP Portal Web site using the necessary log in credentials. Log in credentials must be established by the LEA CAASPP coordinator.

Educators can request access to view the test questions and student responses as part of the formative assessment process to address student relative strengths and needs for improvement. CTA advises local associations to take advantage of the consultation requirement to ensure that teachers who want to see the test items have access to the Interim Assessment Viewing System.

Through the Interim Assessment Viewing System, teachers can access and view all of the items within any of the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments. Here are some of the features of the Interim Assessment Viewing System:

- Teachers can view state interim assessments for their own grade or other grades.⁶ They want to do this to understand the content assessed at adjacent grades or to determine if an adjacent grade level state interim assessment would be more appropriate for a particular group of students.
- Teachers can access the state interim assessments through the viewing system as often as they want or need.

From Erin's experience: The new Interim Assessment Reporting System provides a significant amount of information to teachers. Now, teachers can quickly see their students' individual scores, the level of proficiency of each student, and overall class information. Teachers can filter their information by subgroups and can view each item. The item analysis provides information on claims, targets, standards, depth of knowledge, and level of difficulty. Each student's response on each item can be reviewed, along with rubrics (as applicable) and exemplars. This information has been severely lacking in the past, but now this reporting system is a powerful tool for informing instruction. All teachers in my district will have access to this reporting system.

⁴ For more information about accessibility tools, read the SBAC Fact sheet at http://www.smarterbalanced.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/SmarterBalanced_Accessibility_Factsheet.pdf.

⁵ Universal tools and designated supports are available for all students, but accommodations are only available for students with IEPs and 504s. The SBAC Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines are available at <https://portal.smarterbalanced.org/library/en/usability-accessibility-and-accommodations-guidelines.pdf>.

⁶ Note that as teachers explore the interim assessments they will need to mark responses in order to navigate from page to page, but their responses do not get recorded.

9. Will teachers be able to use the IAB and ICAs any way they see fit as formative practices or will they have to follow SBAC dictates and systems? ⁷

The SBAC system was designed to give classroom teachers flexibility to decide how to use the state interim assessments. CTA wants to emphasize that districts have always had complete control over how to use the state interim assessments.

There are two ways of administering any state interim assessment: standardized; and non-standardized. It is important to note that in the SBAC web portal non-standardized **is the system default** – meaning the assessment coordinator has to manually choose to administer the interim assessments in a standardized format.

Standardized/Benchmark administration should be selected only if the assessment will be administered in a standardized manner similar to the summative assessment.⁸

Common Features of Standardized Administration of the Interim Assessments

- Administered to students individually
- Typically follows procedures for administration used on summative assessments
- It may require hand scoring
- Student performance levels are generated
- Assessment of learning

Standardized Uses for the Interim Assessments

- Diagnostic
- Pre-Assessment
- Benchmark
- Common Assessment

The ICAs and IABs are designed as computer-based tests questions that are machine scored by the Smarter Balanced Test Delivery Engine. Constructed-response questions, including performance tasks, must be hand scored by LEA staff. All ICAs have items that require hand-scoring. The Interim Assessment Reporting System will only display results once all portions of the interim assessment are completed and all local hand-scoring has been completed and submitted.

The goal of using state interim assessments in a non-standardized manner is not to obtain a score for each and every student. Classroom teachers have the flexibility to use the state interim assessment items in any manner they choose, including to use all or part of the interim, to choose not to have the items scored, to use items from a different grade level, etc.

Common Features of Non-standardized Administration of the State Interim Assessments

- Administration can vary.
- Individual, partners or small groups, or whole-class administration.
- Teachers may elect to include some discussion time between test items.
- Hand scoring may be completed as needed.
- Student scores are not usually generated.
- Assessment for learning.

⁷ The content for this answer was copied directly from the CDE Webpage *Using the Interim Assessments* (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/usingias.asp>)

⁸ See also CAASPP Update, Issue 147 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) e-mail update, March 30, 2016. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/caasppupdtissue147.asp>

Benefits of Non-standardized Uses of the State Interim Assessments

- Inform the formative assessment process and improve student learning
- Assessment for learning
- Build teacher content knowledge and assessment literacy
- Familiarize students with the types of test items.
- Allow teachers opportunities to observe and engage with students about assessment items.

Non-standardized administration often involves students working together on the interim assessment or the teacher using all or part of an interim assessment, most often an IAB, as part of a classroom exercise or assignment.

The key here is that this manner of administration focuses on assessment FOR learning. The teachers and students are getting experience with the rigor and item types used in the summative assessment and the teacher is getting a sense of how well the students are succeeding with certain items and where they might be getting stuck.

Teachers may project the IAB items on the screen and work on them as a whole class. In this manner of administration, hand scoring may take place but sometimes hand scoring takes place only for certain student responses—enough for the teacher to have an understanding of success and areas for improvement.⁹

There are opportunities for teachers, using the resources provided on CAASPP Portal Web page to explore the interim assessment and get familiar with the content, types of questions, and rigor.

There are also opportunities to engage students with interim assessment items.

Non-standardized use of the interim assessments also provides opportunities for teachers and students to engage together in the learning process. Teachers can observe students as they are completing items and talk about the parts that were challenging when they are done. All of this can help the teacher improve the classroom instruction for students.

From Erin's experience: My district has really stressed the importance of teachers making decisions on how best to use the interim assessments in their classroom. Many teachers will begin with a standardized administration to receive a score for each student to help drive instructional decisions, and then follow-up with a non-standardized administration to utilize the assessment as an instructional tool. The ability to utilize the assessments multiple times, allows teachers to use portions of an interim assessment as a learning opportunity in class, without feeling the need to go through all the items. I've seen the assessments completed individually, with partners, with small groups, and as a class altogether. This flexibility allows teachers to make decisions based on the needs of their classroom.

⁹ No matter what manner of administration is used as long as student scores for all hand scored items are entered into the Hand Scoring System, a student score report for the interim assessment will be produced.