



March 6, 2020

Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, President
 California State Board of Education
 1430 N Street, Suite 5111
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Via email (sbe@cde.ca.gov)

RE: Item 5: Continuing Development Work and Revisions under Consideration for the 2020 California School Dashboard

Dear President Darling-Hammond:

We represent organizations that advocate on behalf of students, parents, and educators in California's public schools. We are united by a common belief that all schools and districts must address long-standing inequities of opportunity and offer every student an excellent education. We write today to support and encourage the State Board to make the growth model a top priority for 2020-21 Dashboard development.

Schools, teachers, and stakeholders have waited two decades for such a model, and it is long overdue. Incorporating a growth model on the Dashboard will help focus LCAP development on student progress, consistent with California's philosophy of continuous improvement. Because the cornerstone of public education is to equitably promote increased student learning for all students every school year, including a growth measure on the Dashboard is a transparent and more accurate approach to reflect students' progress in each school and district.

Stakeholders, including parents and teachers, benefit from an accurate gauge of students' learning and from the transparency of data to inform the development of LCAP updates and school- and

district-level budget decisions. To that end, we ask that the Board consider the following in the coming months' Dashboard development process:

Report growth data by subgroup on the Dashboard. Growth by student subgroups, easily derived from existing data sets, should be published alongside overall growth for each school and district. Inequities of educational opportunity often reside within schools, and stakeholders need such disaggregated data to advocate for programs that support the most vulnerable students.

This is especially true for the English Learner (EL) subgroup. EL subgroup composition often changes from year-to-year as new students enter the subgroup (typically students with lower-level English language skills), and older students exit (typically higher-performing students who have been reclassified). As a result, current measures of status performance can be more indicative of subgroup composition and less indicative of performance. By contrast, a growth model more accurately gauges actual students' progress by cohort regardless of the starting point.

Report multiple years' results. In the summer of 2020, the state will have results from 6 years of CAASPP English language arts and mathematics test results. This allows the Board to report up to five years of growth data. Providing multiple years of data will allow districts and schools to better understand and make strategic programming and budget decisions. Specifically, by providing 5 years of growth data, schools and stakeholders will be able to get a better sense of how the indicator works, trends over time, and the impact of different or continuing LCAP expenditures. For example, a school that has low growth for 5 consecutive years suggests a need to address a more systematic challenge in a way that a one-year measure simply cannot.

Apply the growth model to the high school level. We believe the Board should apply a growth measure not only to grades 4-8, but also to the 11th-grade high school cohort. At a minimum, we recommend the Board direct the CDE to analyze an 11th-grade growth model and report the data on the Dashboard for informational purposes. This has been done by LEAs across the state using a growth model on their own to report growth data based on their 11th-grade students' improvement. The progress a student makes between Grade 8 and Grade 11 is a relevant indicator of high school performance. Parameters would need to be developed to delineate how long a student needs to attend a specific high school to be considered in this measure. Accordingly, we encourage the Board and staff, in consultation with the Technical Design Group, to explore these issues, and implement a high school growth measure.

An added benefit of expanding the growth measure to the 11th-grade cohort is the opportunity to add other key high school data to the Dashboard. For example, we encourage the Board to reconsider adding high school absenteeism to the 2020 Dashboard, thereby giving stakeholders a stronger data set to examine student performance outcomes.

Report results at the student level. Many states report the growth measure for individual students to help, as appropriate, teachers, parents, and school leaders understand the progress that an individual student makes from year-to-year. This is why we encourage the board to investigate and amend the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium contract to ensure that teachers have

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growth data, in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, available at the beginning of the school year for all their rostered students. This will help teachers gain a better understanding of their entering class and help them identify students who are struggling to make progress. Additionally, providing access to this data in parent reports will help inform parents' engagement with their child's education.

Focus on communication. In order to advocate for what is best for their school, all stakeholders need to understand the best information available from data already collected and would clearly benefit from the additional information provided by a growth measure. Nevertheless, familiarizing stakeholders, educators, and parents with any growth measure can be challenging. We recommend that the 2020 launch include a clear communication plan, appropriately tailored to the audiences that will use the information. Many other states have successfully educated the public on how to understand a growth measure, and we encourage the SBE to direct the CDE to study and emulate those best communications practices.

As Governor Newsom emphasized in his 2020 State of the State Speech, we “can’t manage what we don’t measure.” A well-implemented growth measure is a proven way the state can help make data-driven continuous improvement a reality for all of California’s public schools. Thank you for your consideration and your continued efforts on behalf of all California students.

Respectfully,

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CC: Members, Board of Education