

## **Executive Numbered Memo 004-2006-07 - Changes in the Oregon Statewide Assessment System - Effective Immediately**

September 6, 2006

**TO:** Superintendents, Principals, Special Education Directors, Assessment Directors, Other District Administrators

**RE:** Changes in the Oregon Statewide Assessment System -- effective immediately

### **Background:**

Oregon's statewide assessment was recently subject to a federal peer review of its compliance to federal standards in light of recent reauthorizations. Although Oregon's statewide assessment system has previously been aligned with federal compliance standards, feedback following this federal Peer Review of the statewide assessment system has required the state to immediately implement several revisions including the removal of several previously approved statewide assessment options: Modified assessments, partial assessment, juried assessment, challenging down (targeted assessment) and CLRAS. The issues and potential implications are listed below.

### **Issues:**

Effective immediately, assessments targeted at a lower grade level (challenged down) cannot be included in participation or performance calculations for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Districts should plan on the contingency that tests administered at a grade level higher than the enrolled grade may also not be eligible to be included in the participation or performance calculations for AYP.

Modified Assessments do not yield valid scores and therefore cannot be included in participation or performance calculations for AYP. Modified assessment relates to the outcome of an assessment in which students were tested using an adaptation that was not approved as an accommodation. In 2005-2006 modified assessments were considered evidence of participation, but not sufficient for demonstrating mastery of the standards. Effective immediately, the US Department of Education requires that only valid scores be included in the calculations of AYP for both participation and performance. Juried assessments have not been demonstrated as equivalent to the state's standardized assessment and therefore, effective immediately, will be removed as an alternative option for students who have elected not to take the statewide assessment but who would like to demonstrate proficiency via an alternative mode. As a result, juried assessment cannot be included in the 2006-2007 participation or performance calculations for AYP if federal peer reviewers do not accept the juried assessment by August 1, 2007. Oregon must provide evidence that those students who access the assessment system through the juried assessment process are held to the same expectations (breadth and depth of content) as students who take multiple-choice assessments.

Partial Assessments do not yield valid scores and therefore, effective immediately, cannot be included in participation or performance calculations for AYP. In 2005-2006, a student who answered at least one question on a test was considered to have participated in the assessment but did not demonstrate mastery of the standards. The US Department of Education requires that effective immediately only valid scores be included in the calculations of AYP for both participation and performance. For the upcoming year, participation will be based on a percentage of the assessment that has been attempted. This percentage will be decided by the Technical Advisory Committee and will be disseminated to

districts prior to the testing window. Effective immediately, assessments based on life-skills standards, and not linked or aligned to grade-level academic content standards cannot be included in the 2006-2007 participation or performance calculations for AYP. This will result in the immediate removal of the Career and Life Role Assessment System (CLRAS) as an option for the statewide assessment of students with disabilities.

IEP documentation and decision-making options will change given the outcomes of this federal review.

Training and qualification status will be impacted by the outcomes of this federal review. The relative speed of this transition will impact district timelines to implement training and procedures surrounding the new assessments and requirements.

### **Implications:**

Q: Does the removal of the challenge down option include students with disabilities who are on IEPs that indicate a "lower" benchmark? What assessments should IEP teams consider when making decisions for students whose IEPs indicate a lower benchmark?

ODE is in the process of determining ways to reduce or eliminate the impact that the changes in assessment options will have on district non-participation status for this transition year. However, some students with IEPs or 504 Plans may be eligible to be assessed against grade-level alternate achievement standards (i.e. the Extended Assessments). After first ruling out the appropriateness of the statewide assessment, the IEP team can consider the following options:

For students who are below but not significantly below grade level: grade level assessment with appropriate accommodations depending on student need and skill level.

For students who are significantly below grade level: Extended Assessments may be appropriate depending on student need and skill level.

For students who are significantly below grade level and who are significantly impacted by challenges of receptive and expressive language combined with limitations of mobility and cognitive processing: a Scaffolded Extended Assessment (currently in development) may be appropriate depending on student need and skill level.

All students, including students with disabilities, will need to be assessed against their grade level achievement standards. IEP teams will continue to use the assessment option that (a) meets the state requirements, and (b) yields the most helpful information about a student's instructional level. If, after a thorough review of the four approved statewide assessment options, the IEP team believes that none are appropriate given the needs of their student, then, the IEP team should identify an alternative assessment that will provide current performance level(s) of the student for continuing instructional development, and ensure that all IEP team members understand the selection of this alternative assessment will result in the student's scores not being included in the calculations of AYP for both participation and performance.

### **Questions and Answers:**

Q: Why would having a student take a test at a higher level (challenging or targeting up) be considered not eligible for participation or performance calculations?

According to the federal peer review, targeting to a higher-grade level may not ensure that grade level content has been mastered.

Q: If a student's assessment is modified (any change in how the test is delivered or the student has responded that has not been approved and listed in the accommodations tables) these students' scores will not count for AYP purposes, but will they demonstrate participation?

No. This assessment will not be included in either the district's participation or AYP counts.

Q: In terms of partial assessment, sometimes a student attempts the assessment but after only a few responses elects to or is allowed to stop. Will these responses demonstrate participation?

No. This assessment will not be included in either the district's participation or AYP counts.

Q: If a student takes the Juried Assessment will it count toward his or her performance or participation for Adequate Yearly Progress?

No. IEP teams should continue to choose the most appropriate assessment available for students. However, districts should also be aware of the potential use of those data within the accountability system. The Department has released a Request for Proposals to help design, implement and analyze a study that should provide sufficient evidence for federal approval of the Juried Assessment\* process as an equivalent system to the statewide assessment, however, this request has not yet been approved.

(\*In the past two years only 2 requests for Juried Assessment have been submitted for students with IEPs.)

Q: How are IEP teams going to present this information to parents and document decisions for assessment options as required under federal law? IEP teams should continue to make assessment decisions based on the student's individual needs. Once the appropriate statewide assessment option is determined by the IEP team the IEP team facilitator will explain to the parents how the test results will be reported.

Districts will be kept apprised of any changes to the Oregon Standard IEP Guidelines for use (Part A) that may result from the revised regulations by mid-September. The Department is working diligently to make any changes as minimal as possible.

Q: Why has CLRAS been removed from Oregon's list of accepted alternate assessments?

The Career and Life Role Assessment System (CLRAS) was designed in response to the IDEA requirement that each state develop alternate assessments for children with disabilities who cannot participate in statewide assessment programs. See 34 CFR 300.138 (1999). For the population of students with life-skills goals, CLRAS was designed to be linked to Oregon's Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM) standards as a means to bypass some of the more difficult content standards at each grade. As a result CLRAS was not explicitly tied to grade level content standards. A recent peer review of Oregon's alternate assessment system evaluated Oregon's alternate assessment system with the intersecting criteria provided by both NCLB and IDEA and found that CLRAS did not conform to current assessment expectations.

**Questions and Answers (cont'd):**

Q: Can a school or district continue to use the CLRAS for progress monitoring?

Yes. However, districts and schools must note that the CLRAS will no longer be part of Oregon's Statewide Assessment System. Therefore, CLRAS scores will no longer count toward AYP or toward participation on a statewide assessment. Districts and schools must also note that all CLRAS upkeep, maintenance, and purchase will be conducted and negotiated individually between districts and PSU (the creators of the CLRAS). Districts are encouraged to use forms of progress monitoring for their students that also incorporate academic indicators that link to Oregon's content standards.

Q: What will replace the CLRAS?

Revisions to the current Extended Subject Area Assessments will include the creation of a scaffolded academic level assessment for students whose IEP teams had previously determined an assessment such as the CLRAS was appropriate. This assessment will be available to all districts for the 2006-2007 school year.

Q: When will teachers, schools, and districts be trained on the new assessments?

Additional information on training and updates to the Extended Assessments, including the Scaffolded Extended Assessments, will be available at the Special Education Fall Administrator Conference.

Q: Given the rapidity of this transition, will schools and districts be required to use the replacement assessment?

The IDEA and NCLB require all students to be included in the state and districtwide assessment system, with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments where necessary and as indicated on students' IEPs. As with previous years, any students not assessed are considered non-participating.