

September 19, 2011

The Association of State Supervisors of Mathematics (ASSM), an organization of mathematics supervisors from State Departments of Education, is pleased to provide comments on the SBAC Draft Content Specifications for the Summative Assessment of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics. These comments reflect a summary of submissions from ASSM members and the ASSM Board of Directors.

ASSM recognizes the importance of this work and appreciates the efforts of those involved with developing the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSSM) and the SBAC Draft Content Specifications for Mathematics. We urge the consortium to continue to include K-12 classroom teachers and state mathematics leaders in the revision process for the content frameworks and the continued development of the assessment frameworks. We also urge the SBAC and PARCC consortia to continue to dialogue and collaborate regarding essential elements of the respective assessment frameworks.

Four Claims

The four claims make a great deal of sense and represent the intent of the CCSSM and expectations of K-12 mathematics. The SBAC documents reflect the conceptual and procedural knowledge and skills that students need, as well as a focused attention on the *Standards for Mathematical Practice*. Weaving the content and practice standards together provides the foundation that K-12 educators will rely on for the development and implementation of “college and career ready” curriculum and instruction.

The claims have strong overtones of the strands of mathematical proficiency. The document would benefit from citing *Adding It Up* (NRC, 2001b) to parallel the citations of *Knowing What Students Know* (NRC, 2001a), thereby setting the SBAC document on two strong pillars, one in mathematics and one in assessment.

In addition, the rationale and evidence for each claim provides clarity for development of the assessment. Consistent reference to mathematically proficient students ties the SBAC Content Specifications to the CCSSM and has the potential to focus instruction on student learning.

We believe that building the SBAC assessment system on the foundation of four powerful and overarching claims is most appropriate and a welcome proposal.

Prioritizing Standards (Appendix A)

There should be fewer priority categories. While there is general agreement that prioritizing standards will aid in grade level/course focus, there is a serious concern that prioritizing content clusters into three categories may result in neglect of standards that are relegated to the third priority level.

Would not two levels be sufficient? Two levels would still communicate the relative importance of a high priority content cluster, yet be less likely to result in omission of level 3 clusters and standards. It was noted that at the high school level, approximately one-half of the clusters are either three or two-star priority and half are one-star priority. The concern, again, is that clusters at the third priority level may be deemed unimportant and not addressed in classroom instruction. This issue may be manifested when high priority items in one grade are dependent upon low priority items in the previous grade(s).

Assessment will drive classroom instruction; therefore, assessment priorities need to be considered in light of classroom practice so that they do not result in the unintended narrowing of the curriculum. A document clarifying the relationship between priorities across domains and grade levels will be helpful as educators and curriculum developers prioritize classroom instruction.

Standards for Mathematical Practice

The *Standards for Mathematical Practice* are well represented across the SBAC documents. There appears to be a good balance between the content standards and the practice standards.

Proposed Scoring Reporting Categories (p. 20)

This is an area that needs further clarification in the next draft. The three to four areas listed under the Concepts and Procedures Score (Claim 1) omit some content clusters. If some content acquisition is subsumed under other content clusters, the message needs to be more transparent. In high school, for example, geometry is not listed as a C & P sub-score. On the surface, this seems to be a particularly serious omission.

It was recommended that SBAC consider using a different set of reporting categories at the high school. Algebra and functions are very closely related, so it may be advantageous to combine them. The high school conceptual categories or another set of topics (e.g. algebra & functions, geometry, statistics & probability) will more accurately reflect the focus of mathematics content at the high school level.

Further clarification is needed on the relationship between the reporting categories to the claims, CCSSM conceptual categories, domains, clusters and standards. The Critical Areas provide focus at the K-8 level and may be a viable option as reporting categories.

Claims 2-4 appear to be general, not reporting on specific mathematical content areas. It is critical that the reporting tool for these claims gives teachers sufficient information to adjust practice and improve student achievement.

Additional Comments /Questions

The following questions were submitted by ASSM members in the hope that answers and clarifications are provided in the next draft:

- If the summative assessment targets represent prioritized content, what will the interim and formative assessments being developed assess? Will they assess targets only, or will they be developed with a focus on learning progressions? There is a concern that in the current assessment culture, teachers and administrators will attempt to bullet the targets and teach only that which is explicitly assessed, ignoring the progression of the CCSSM.
- How will Computer Adaptive Testing adequately assess Claims 2-4?
- How will the assessments be made adaptive to individual student performance and minimize barriers for students with disabilities and English language learners?

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Association of State Supervisors of Mathematics:



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