



Date: 04/15/2021  
To: NS Board  
From: James Dent, Chief Academic Officer  
Subject: Alternative Assessment Memo

### Background

(From April 7, 2021 California Department of Education Press Release)

*The U.S. Department of Education notified California this week that the state's request for relief from certain federal testing, accountability, and reporting requirements has been granted.*

*In a letter to State Superintendent Tony Thurmond and State Board President Linda Darling-Hammond, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Programs Ian Rosenblum said he was "pleased to approve" California's request. "The intent of these accountability waivers is to focus on assessments to provide information to parents, educators, and the public about student performance and to help target resources and supports," Rosenblum wrote. "This is particularly crucial this year, due to the COVID pandemic."*

*In February, the State Board of Education voted to seek a waiver that would give schools the means to account for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in their ability to assess students. The Board's action was in response to [federal guidance](#) allowing states to seek flexibility given that most students have yet to return to in-person instruction either part- or full-time.*

*The state also discussed its plan to give schools permission to report data from standards-aligned interim or diagnostic tests they have been using where it is not viable to administer the state summative assessments due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*Unlike last year, the U.S. Department of Education did not invite states to apply for blanket waivers that would allow states to opt-out of annual testing altogether, citing the role testing data plays in supporting students.*

*As granted, California's waiver:*

- *Decouples state assessments from federal accountability requirements, as applicable. Instead, any data collected will be used to inform local educators, parents, and the public and align resources to student supports.*
- *Waives federal penalties for student testing participation rates of less than 95 percent on the state's Smarter Balanced English language arts and math.*

## Recommendation

After consultation with the Academic Success Committee, it is recommended the Board approve the staff's recommendation to use the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment which is published by the Northwest Evaluation Association and administered to millions of students annually. Additionally, Staff will implement the California Science Test or an alternate approved science test for grades 5 and 8 as required.

## Rationale

Navigator students, like students across the nation, have experienced learning loss due to the pandemic. We feel it is critical to maximize learning time this spring and for a variety of reasons listed below, we feel using MAP will be significantly more efficient and useful this year while providing us more timely information on student needs.

1. MAP can typically be administered in four days and data is provided immediately, allowing us to adjust instruction this spring, prepare for summer school, and organize student learning groups for classroom instruction in the fall..
2. SBAC takes up to eight days in most grades and eleven days in the science testing grades (5th and 8th) and data can take weeks to months to receive in a meaningful format.
3. We intended to administer MAP this spring as an interim assessment to support the annual, summative SBAC. Using MAP instead of SBAC will conserve instructional hours and resources.
4. This plan is similar to what Gilroy Unified and Pajaro Valley are planning to do. We are still in the process of finding out what Hollister School District intends to do.
5. Site leadership teams unanimously support using MAP this spring.
6. Administering a single assessment in spring will reduce potential student anxiety surrounding testing and disruptions of normal schedules.

It should be noted that Navigator strongly believes in the SBAC as an effective and valuable assessment of college readiness when it comes to academic skills. We look forward to (hopefully) having a full year of instruction next year and administering the SBAC again then. For more information on the MAP test, visit [this blog](#) provided by NWEA.