

BRIAN SANDOVAL
Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

SOUTHERN NEVADA OFFICE
9890 S. Maryland Parkway, Suite 221
Las Vegas, Nevada 89183
(702) 486-6458
Fax: (702)486-6450
<http://teachers.nv.gov>

DALE A.R. ERQUIAGA
Superintendent of Public Instruction



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
700 E. Fifth Street
Carson City, Nevada 89701-5096
(775) 687 - 9200 · Fax: (775) 687 - 9101
<http://www.doe.nv.gov>

April 20, 2015

GUIDANCE MEMORANDUM #15-02

TO: All School Districts and Charter Schools

FROM: Dale A.R. Erquiaga
Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: School Year 2014-15 Administration of the Criterion-referenced Examinations in English language arts and Mathematics

This guidance memorandum is issued pursuant to the authority provided in NRS 385.175(5), directing the Superintendent of Public Instruction to enforce the observance of Title 34 of Nevada's statutes and all other statutes and regulations governing public education. Guidance and the directives contained in this memorandum also rely on NRS 389.604, concerning an irregularity in testing administration.

This office is aware of the disruption in computer service during the administration of the criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) in English language arts and mathematics, such CRTs being the Smarter Balanced assessments, as required by NRS 389.550. On or about Tuesday, April 14, school districts and charter schools experienced delays in the ability of students to logon to the testing server, connections were lost during testing, and other anomalies occurred. Information received from the testing vendor, Measured Progress, and the testing provider, Smarter Balanced, confirmed systemic computer challenges in the administration of the CRTs. The causes of such challenges need not be discussed here, but sufficient evidence has been presented to the Department to confirm that the CRTs were not administered in the manner intended. Although the vendor(s) indicate they have identified and addressed the problem, it is possible that additional administration irregularities may occur. This leads me to declare a statewide irregularity in testing administration for the CRTs in English language arts and mathematics for this school year, as defined in statute:

NRS 389.604 "Irregularity in testing administration" defined. *"Irregularity in testing administration" means the failure to administer an examination to pupils pursuant to NRS 389.550 or 389.805 or the college and career readiness assessment pursuant to NRS 389.807 in the manner intended by the person or entity that created the examination or assessment.*

(continued)

Guidance Memorandum #15-02

April 20, 2015

Page Two

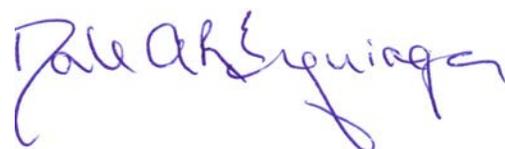
The intent of this guidance is twofold: to provide a choice to Nevada districts to continue testing online or to request paper and pencil, and to provide clarity for schools and districts in identifying and documenting administrative irregularities.

As of today's date, online testing was set to resume based on the vendor's assurance of the corrected problem and positive results from stress testing. Additional problems have been reported. Recognizing that some districts or charter schools may not wish to continue with online testing, I am providing school districts and charter schools with the choice of requesting a paper and pencil version of the Smarter Balanced CRTs. Either version of the test will suffice for purposes of federal and state participation requirements.

School districts and charter schools are advised to continue testing through the assigned testing time period. If individual schools are unable to complete the testing, either due to systemic computer challenges or because insufficient time may exist in the school year to compensate for delays in test administration (paper or online), they may certify to this office on a prescribed form that they have made a good faith effort to have students participate in the annual CRTs. Schools will be determined to have made a good faith effort to participate in the face of systemic computer challenges and timing difficulties if students make attempts to complete the CRTs during at least two unique sittings within the established testing window. The Department will work with each school on a case-by-case basis in submitting a request for this determination.

Federal participation requirements cannot be waived, but this office will remain in communication with the U.S. Department of Education in an attempt to address any concerns that may result from statewide challenges in administering the CRT. Based on this office's understanding of federal requirements and past practice in situations in which an irregularity in testing administration occurred, it is my belief that federal participation requirements will be met. Furthermore, state participation requirements for the Nevada School Performance Framework can be addressed by this Department as accountability reports are prepared for School Year 2014-15; it is the intent of this office not to penalize any school that is able to document a good faith effort to complete the CRTs as described in this memorandum.

Finally, it is important to recognize this irregularity in testing administration does not compromise the validity or importance of the underlying Smarter Balanced assessment. Nor should it be seen as an indictment of computer testing in general. An administrative irregularity occurred in a particular computer delivery system. Thousands of students will complete tests, despite this irregularity, and their testing results can still provide valuable information for principals, teachers, and parents to assist students in continually improving their achievement levels.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Taleah Squigga", is located at the bottom right of the page.