March 1, 2006

Dear High School Principals:

THE EARLY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM FOR 2006

Background

On behalf of the California Department of Education (CDE), State Board of Education (SBE), and California State University (CSU), we are asking for your continuing support of the Early Assessment Program (EAP) by encouraging your eleventh grade students to take the EAP in English-language arts and mathematics.

In collaboration with the CDE and SBE, the CSU developed the EAP to provide students, their families, and high schools the opportunity to assess eleventh grade student readiness for college-level English and mathematics, i.e., skills that students who choose either to enter college or the workforce directly out of high school will need to be successful. The EAP consists of questions from the eleventh grade California Standards Tests (CSTs) in English-language arts, Algebra II, and Summative High School Mathematics plus 15 additional multiple-choice questions and a written essay. The spring 2006 administration is the third year that the EAP will be available to all students enrolled in eleventh grade who are eligible to take the eleventh grade CST in English-language arts and the CSTs in Algebra II and/or Summative High School Mathematics.

Benefits for Students: Why should eleventh grade students be encouraged to participate in the Early Assessment Program?

- The EAP provides valuable information to the high school about student readiness for college-level English and mathematics.
- The EAP report enables the student, family, and high school to identify the student’s need for additional preparation in English and mathematics while still enrolled in high school.
March 1, 2006  
Page 2

As appropriate, working with high school counselors and teachers, students have the 
opportunity to enroll in mathematics classes in twelfth grade or to participate in 
web-based mathematics interactive tutorials. They may also enroll in English classes 
that include additional instruction in expository reading and writing. These are essential 
skills that high school teachers have identified as necessary for success not only in 
English but across the curriculum.

While the EAP questions are voluntary for eleventh grade students, the response to the 
EAP has been overwhelming. For spring 2005:

- A total of 69 percent of all eleventh grade students eligible to take the CSTs in 
  Algebra II/Summative High School Mathematics completed the state-mandated 
  CSTs plus the optional EAP questions.

- A total of 46 percent of all eleventh grade students eligible to take the CST in 
  English-language arts completed the state-mandated CST plus the optional EAP 
  questions and the EAP written essay.

With your support, we hope to increase further the number of eleventh grade students 
who voluntarily choose to complete the EAP by answering the additional multiple-choice 
questions and completing a written essay.

The EAP not only provides an opportunity to high schools to identify students who need 
additional work in English and mathematics in twelfth grade, it also provides an 
additional benefit to students who attend any of the CSUs 23 campuses. Students who 
are determined to be college-ready on the basis of the EAP are exempt from 
taking the CSUs placement tests in English and mathematics and move directly 
into baccalaureate-level classes upon enrollment.

Students who are not college-ready at the end of eleventh grade have the opportunity to 
strengthen their skills in twelfth grade, which will help to increase their mastery of the 
subjects and their ability to demonstrate proficiency on the CSUs English and 
mathematics placement tests.

New Courses and Continuing Professional Development

Responding to requests from the CDE and high schools, the CSU, working with college 
and high school English faculty and reading experts, developed a curriculum for a 
twelfth grade Expository Reading and Writing Course that may be used by the high 
school as a full, one-year course or from which modules may be integrated into existing 
twelfth grade English classes. The Expository Reading and Writing Course is aligned
March 1, 2006
Page 3

with the English-language arts content standards and consists of lessons based on non-fiction and fiction texts. It can fulfill the “B” requirement of the University of California/CSU (A-G) college preparatory course pattern. The CSU, in collaboration with the county offices of education, provides professional development programs for high school English teachers for the twelfth grade Expository Reading and Writing Course as well as for high school mathematics teachers.

Request for Cooperation

Included with this letter, the CSU Office of the Chancellor has provided packets of letters to each California eleventh grade English and mathematics teacher and eleventh grade student. The letter addressed to teachers asks them to encourage their eleventh grade students to participate in the EAP during the spring 2006 administration of the CSTs by completing the voluntary EAP questions and written essay. The letter addressed to students explains advantages of participating in the EAP and what they need to do to ensure they receive an EAP score report. Please indicate to your counselor and teachers the importance of distributing these letters to students no less than two weeks before the CSTs are administered on your high school campus. A copy of each of these letters is enclosed.

If you have any questions regarding the EAP please visit the CSU Web site at http://www.calstate.edu/eap, or contact Carolina Cardenas, Associate Director, Student Academic Support, CSU Office of the Chancellor, at (562) 951-4724 or by e-mail at ccardenas@calstate.edu. You may also contact the EAP coordinator at the CSU campus nearest you. A listing of coordinators can be found on the CSU Web site at http://www.calstate.edu/eap/documents/eap_roster0506.pdf.

Thank you for your continued support of these collaborative efforts to help prepare California high school graduates for higher education and California’s workforce.

Sincerely,

JACK O’CONNELL
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

CHARLES B. REED, Chancellor
The California State University

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Enclosures