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February 10, 2015

Dear Superintendent Ritz,

As you requested, I've outlined for you IDOE's requirements and the rationale for the 2015 ISTEP+ testing program and how revisions to those requirements could change the design and thus the length of the 2015 ISTEP+ test. As you know, the current test design has passed federal waiver review for a valid and reliable test. However, given the recent concerns about the length of the test in the 2015 transition year, you could consider changes to your requirements that would result in a shorter test and might still meet state and federal requirements. We look forward to the opportunity to work with Indiana to discuss the requirements, the available options, and the pros and cons of each option to meet Indiana's assessment needs.

**Background:**

In the spring and summer of 2014, in response to the State's adoption of the Indiana Academic Standards, the IDOE created a scope of work for a new assessment to measure the Standards, and, in consultation with CTB, developed a test design for the 2015 ISTEP+. Given the requirements and the timeline to have an operational test of the new standards in place by spring 2015, an "operational field test" design was developed with and approved by IDOE. In this design, items that have not previously been field tested are administered during operational testing, and the decisions about which items will contribute to the final score are made after review of the performance of the items. The design received federal review and approval and resulted in the reinstatement of Indiana's NCLB waiver. Key requirements for the design include the following:

1. Create a valid and reliable assessment to meet state and federal accountability requirements.
2. Move completely away from the "old" ISTEP+ test – both the content and the scales.
3. Do not use any previous ISTEP+ content, even for linking.
4. Measure Indiana's new Academic Standards in 2015.
5. Field test additional items for use in 2016.
6. Continue the Part 1 (formerly called "Applied Skills") and Part 2 test administration model.
7. Include open-ended as well as multiple choice items.
8. Add new item types to measure the new Standards appropriately.
9. Create new vertical scales for measuring growth.
10. Provide scores at the total test and at the reporting category levels.
11. Test Science in Grades 4 and 6 and Social Studies in Grades 5 and 7.
12. Conduct the first operational administration in spring 2015.

The requirements and the design were approved by the IDOE and were presented to the State Board in August. Since then, CTB has developed the assessments to fulfill these requirements, the IDOE and teacher reviewers have approved the content and the tests, and both print and online forms will be ready for administration in the next few weeks.

#### Reducing Testing Time:

This is a transition year for Indiana, with longer tests just this year, as you move from your previous set of standards to the new Indiana Academic Standards and build a completely new assessment program for 2015 and future years. Proceeding with the current test design allows you to meet all of your requirements, including federal accountability requirements, for a valid, reliable test.

By designing the test to meet all of the current requirements, Indiana is able to move swiftly to a complete assessment of your new standards in 2015 and lay the groundwork for the assessments in future years. But accomplishing all of this, in less than one year, necessitated a longer test in 2015 than in 2014. The 2016 tests will be shorter than the 2015 tests, and close to 2014 test lengths.

However, if the IDOE is now concerned about the length of time needed for testing in this transition year, there are options you could consider, if some of the requirements are relaxed, to reduce the amount of time students will test in 2015. There are details to work through for each of these -- and some may prove not to be viable or desirable -- but the options to consider include the following:

- A. Revise Requirement 1: Significantly shorten Part I, the open-ended portion, of ISTEP+, keeping just the two writing sessions that include reading and writing content that meet the new standards.
- B. Eliminate Requirement 5: Do not field test additional content for 2016 tests.
- C. Eliminate Requirement 9: Postpone the creation of vertical scales in 2015.
- D. Revise Requirement 10: Report total ELA and Math scores only, delaying the introduction of more detailed reporting categories.
- E. Revise Requirement 4: Introduce measurement of the new standards more gradually, emphasizing just some this year. Administer last year's ISTEP+ Part 2, aligned to the previous Indiana Standards, and the new 2015 Part 1, so transition to the new standards is gradual.
- F. Delay Requirements 4 and 12: Revert to the previous standards and administer last year's test.
- G. Eliminate Requirement 11: Eliminate the Science and/or Social Studies tests.

#### Considerations:

Each of the changes to requirements listed above will reduce testing time. Some, such as revising Requirement 1, will have a significant impact on testing time (several hours) while others would have less significant impact and/or would impact only certain grades. In addition, each change could have implications with respect to Indiana legislative requirements, federal requirements, waivers, and peer review. There may also be implications with respect to materials that have already been produced, and revising these could impact the start of testing. All need further discussion. CTB is ready to work with Indiana to assess the implications and help determine the best course of action.

Sincerely,

Ellen Haley