

## Cost Concerns About Common Core in Idaho

There are two sources of cost information regarding Common Core in Idaho. The first source we have referenced in our messaging is a cost analysis completed by a firm called AccountabilityWorks in 2012, using national schools survey data from 2009-2010. The results were published by The Pioneer Institute in a report called "National Cost of Aligning States and Localities to the Common Core Standards" in 2012. (A copy of that report was attached to your email along with this paper.)

The study comprises three areas of cost: 1) professional development, 2) textbooks and materials, and 3) multi-year technology costs, and estimates for an anticipated 7-year implementation period (with approx. 67% occurring up front). I've also attached the appendices from the AccountabilityWorks study that provides detail by state for 2 of these categories.

Following is the summary for Idaho from these materials....

Total textbooks and materials	\$ 16,515,000 (appendix).....	total texts and materials	\$16,515,000
One-time technology cost	\$ 18,481,333 (appendix)		
Add'l tech costs (year 1)	\$ 1,994,370 (appendix)		
Add'l tech costs (years 2-7)	\$ 24,701,826 (appendix).....	total technology costs	\$ 45,177,529
Professional development	~ \$ 30,000,000 (est. Fig 4B)...	total staff development	\$ 29,353,000
		Total estimated implementation costs (7 years)	\$ 91,045,529

NOTE: One source also included the estimate for testing of \$8.2M, bringing the total to \$99M.

The basic report costs above do not include the cost of SBAC assessments (testing), which was covered by Ze'ev Wurman at our forum in July. Not only does Mr. Wurman serve as a math standards professional for the state of California, he also serves as a consultant for education policy and assessment with TWF Consulting in Palo Alto. Here are some of the points he has made...

- 1) While initial estimates from SBAC are total annual testing costs of \$3.4M (+.6M for science) compared to our current \$6M equivalent (including science). Based on past experience in CA and KY Mr. Wurman believes this cost is grossly underestimated. He also believes that with the hand-scoring of performance items (vs. computer scoring), a more realistic estimate would be between \$6M and \$8.3M annually. So he cautions against relying on any perceived savings in this area.
- 2) His greater concern relates to the fact that Idaho's testing consortium the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), has not yet finalized their plans for a testing schedule. Despite their initial hope to stick to one end of year test, his experience with assessments causes him to believe that they will likely come to the same conclusion as the other consortium (PARCC), who in the end determined it was necessary to split the requirements into two rounds.

The mandatory "summative" assessments are comprised of two parts. The *performance-based assessments* (which must be manually scored) and the *computer-adaptive assessments* (which are computer scored). There are also *optional interim assessments*, which have not been considered for purposes of this commentary. The other consortium (PARCC) concluded that the performance-based tests (due to their manual scoring requirement) must be administered earlier in the year (after 75% of the school year), in order for the scoring to be completed at the same time as the computer adaptive tests (completed after 90% of the year).

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(# 2 – continued)

If indeed, SBAC comes to require two rounds of testing instead of one like ISAT, the class time lost (or reduced) for testing each year will be doubled. Idaho currently spends 4 weeks per year as a testing window. With SBAC, it's likely that this could become two 4-week windows, or 20% of available instruction time each year, thereby also removing computers from the classroom to be used for testing for 20% of the year.

- 3) Idaho tests approximately 150,000 students each year about 1/4 at a time, or 37,500 students at a time. This requires that 37,500 of existing computers be temporarily rededicated to testing rather than being available for classroom instruction. In order to reduce the impact of removing computers from classrooms, Idaho might consider purchasing 37,500 machines dedicated to testing. Mr. Wurman's cost estimate including computers, server infrastructure, electrical & HVAC, additional bandwidth, insurance, and support amounts to about \$20M. If we replace only 25% of the computers annually, this becomes an annual equipment cost... which is reasonable considering the potential harsh treatment of equipment by students, as well as rapidly changing technology itself.
- 4) One additional concern is with regard to the difference in acceptable computer specifications between our ISAT testing requirements and those of the SBAC tests. While both have similar minimum requirements, only the ISAT is comfortable operating at these minimums due to having only minimal graphics requirements and mostly multiple-choice student responses. For SBAC this is really the absolute minimum, so in order to have a reasonable response time, we need more bandwidth, more memory, more CPU, more screen resolution, etc. So once we go to SBAC there will be a rather rapid need for computer upgrades. Mr. Wurman cited a similar case in Florida, who was faced with needing computer upgrades and asked for \$600M, where they have less than 10 times the number of Idaho students. Using their bid pricing we can extrapolate that a similar upgrade in Idaho might be \$60M. Florida is now considering withdrawing from their assessment consortia (PARCC) due to "insufficient technology".