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August 18, 2009

The Honorable Senator Denise Moreno Ducheny
State Capitol, Room 5035
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Ducheny,

Governor Schwarzenegger's recent amendments to the state budgets for 2008-9 and 2009-10 include a stoppage of work on instructional materials adoptions and curriculum framework revisions. This work *has already begun or even nears completion* in both History-Social Science and Science. While the current budget situation demands difficult cuts be made, the detrimental effects to education from this particular action far outweigh the benefits from the saving less than \$705,000 from the Department of Education budget. We are counting on your leadership to help restore the critical funding needed to complete these important revisions.

The Curriculum Frameworks are critical tools supporting the education community's efforts to implement the state's standards program effectively. One might argue that we already have the standards, which lie at the core of our efforts to advance high-quality instruction, and they remain unaltered – so who needs a new framework, and who uses it, anyway? Certainly, the Frameworks are used alongside the standards in the development and adoption of classroom instructional materials. Their usefulness, however, extends much deeper. While the standards comprise a list of essential topics to cover in each class, the Frameworks provide guidance on *how* to address those topics in an effective and engaging manner with students. They are essential resources in professional development and other initiatives to improve the quality of teaching. The Frameworks are core materials used by county offices of education, teacher education programs, subject matter projects, and many other organizations whose work focuses on supporting teachers to develop students' abilities to think critically about the subject matter they are studying. It is in the Frameworks that those professionals, as well as parents and others in the educational community, find the most current, research-based instructional practices.

The need for these materials to be up-to-date explains the importance of revising frameworks on a regular basis. One might be tempted to argue that the state already has frameworks adopted less than a decade ago – so why do we need *new* frameworks? The answer is that scholarship, in terms of both disciplinary content and best practices, has advanced dramatically over the past

few years. While much of the material in the existing frameworks remains useful, there are many areas in which updating is sorely needed. Much work has already been completed on both the History-Social Science and Science Frameworks to incorporate this new scholarship. The updated draft of the History-Social Science Framework includes:

- New narratives for both world and U.S. history based on recent scholarship, providing teachers with coherent approaches to organize historical content in meaningful, engaging ways for students
- Discourse around closing the achievement gap through incorporation of culturally-relevant content and instructional approaches
- Numerous and varied examples of authentic assessment that provide students with multiple ways to express their knowledge and understanding of key historical facts and concepts
- Strategies to help EL students access expository readings, develop their academic vocabulary, and improve their reading comprehension
- Suggestions for advancing civic education and service learning to help students apply historical understanding to current societal issues
- Approaches to incorporate recently-published materials from the Education and the Environment Initiative into history classes
- An expanded, updated list of materials, professional development opportunities, and other resources to support teachers' professional growth and effectiveness
- New appendices addressing critical topics such as teaching about religion in history, understanding of world history and cultures, the need for an actively engaged citizenry, and the importance of geographic literacy

The revised Science Framework is in process as well, and will include:

- Revision of content standard narratives to provide more consistent, quality exemplars for each standard at each grade level, reflecting current research and new discoveries in the field
- Information on advances in quickly-changing areas of scientific endeavor, such as stem cell research
- Recent research on using scientific inquiry as a pedagogical strategy
- Numerous and varied examples of authentic assessment that provide students with multiple ways to express their knowledge and understanding of key scientific facts and concepts
- Approaches to incorporate recently-published materials from the Education and the Environment Initiative into science classes
- Resources to support improvement of teacher preparation and professional development programs

The History-Social Science Framework Committee completed drafting the revised Framework on June 5, and presented the draft to the California Curriculum Commission on July 16. Focus groups are meeting across the state to provide the basis for writing the new Science Framework. For the sake of

saving a small amount of money, that work will be shelved, and the educational community left with outdated materials. These materials are too important, and the work has gone too far, to suffer this fate. Please do whatever can be done to insure that these processes are brought to fruition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheila Jordan" with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Sheila Jordan, Superintendent
Alameda County Schools