



Los Angeles County Office of Education

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Darline P. Robles, Ph.D.
Superintendent

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

Dear Senator Ducheny:

On July 28, 2009, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed ABX4 2 (Chapter 2, Statutes of 2009-10 Fourth Extraordinary Session) which amends the state budgets for 2008-09 and 2009-10 to close the latest \$24 billion gap. In Section 28, this bill stops all work on instructional materials adoptions and curriculum framework revisions effective immediately and continuing until the 2013-14 school year, eliminating \$705,000 from the Department of Education budget.

The decision to “red line” the instructional materials adoption process, which includes a halt to the revision of all Frameworks, will be extremely detrimental to the quality and efficacy of classroom instruction for K-12 teachers in all subject areas, resulting in dire consequences to the academic success of millions of students of California.

The Curriculum Frameworks play a critical role in guiding high quality instruction for implementing California’s world-class standards. Newly introduced chapters focused on universal access, assessment, and professional development provide current research-based strategies for closing the achievement gap and improving academic achievement for all students across all grade levels in all subject areas. Descriptions and examples of differentiated instruction, content literacy strategies, and English Learner scaffolding techniques provide practical, effective approaches to helping *all* students learn and succeed. Discipline specific methodologies provide teachers with resources to develop high-level critical thinking and problem solving skills to enable students to make real world connections and solve problems in our highly technical, complex 21st century workplace.

The History-Social Science and Science Frameworks scheduled for adoption in 2010 and 2011 respectively, provide critical information and resources needed by students in the 21st century. The History-Social Science draft document, completed by the History-Social Science Framework Committee on June 5 and presented to the California Curriculum Commission on July 16 includes updated content and pedagogical approaches to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become informed, responsible, engaged citizens in our national and world community. The updated draft includes:

- powerful examples of authentic assessment that provide students with multiple vehicles for demonstrating knowledge and understanding of historical concepts
- discussion of culturally relevant content and instruction to help close the achievement gap in history-social science
- literacy and English Learner strategies to help students access rigorous expository text, expand academic vocabulary, and improve reading comprehension skills
- advances in civic education and service-learning approaches to help students apply historical understanding to current issues and problems in society as responsible members of our democratic society
- strategies for integrating the Education and the Environment Initiative
- an updated list of resources and professional organizations to support teachers' ongoing professional development and instructional practices
- appendices that address the growing need for understanding world history and cultures, the need for an actively engaged citizenry, the importance of geographic literacy, and clarification about the importance of teaching about religion in a constitutionally permissible manner within the history-social science curriculum

The Science Framework is currently being written to include the information generated by a number of focus groups across the state. Updated elements include:

- augmentation of content standard narratives to provide more consistent, quality exemplars across all grade level standards
- advances in stem cell research
- strategies for integrating the Education and the Environment Initiative
- information on the current workforce crisis, with recommendations for K-12 teachers to encourage more students to enter careers involving science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM-related careers)
- resources for improving teacher preparation in college and university programs
- current research on inquiry as an effective pedagogical strategy
- examples of authentic assessment that provide students with multiple vehicles for demonstrating knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and mastery of science process skills
- successful, research-based professional development models that promote content rigor and pedagogical expertise
- an updated explanation of the science standards to advance current research and discoveries

These two frameworks are very close to completion and critically important to preparing students to become historically literate, civically engaged and adept in the scientific method to understand and conquer the complex challenges of our society and improve the quality of life for all.

Senator Denise Moreno Ducheny

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One of the primary functions of the Curriculum Frameworks is to provide guidance and criteria for the development and adoption of instructional materials for classroom use. But we must also remember that the Frameworks play a much larger role in the educational community. They provide guidance to teachers in both public and private settings across the state and across the nation. They serve as model resources for developing professional development and improving teacher quality. Teacher education programs, county offices of education, subject matter projects, and a host of private and non-profit organizations utilize the California Curriculum Frameworks to drive their training and professional development programs. Web site clearinghouses, supplementary materials, parents, after-school programs, and alternative education settings rely on the most current, research-based instructional practices found in our frameworks.

With the current budget crises, school districts across the state have been forced to divert funds normally earmarked for state adopted instructional materials. Districts will be looking for creative alternatives to maintain the rigor of their academic programs. They will rely heavily on teacher professional development and alternative resources to raise academic achievement, close gaps, and meet the ever-changing needs of our student population and challenges of the 21st century. Reduction of funds for professional development at many schools may cause the frameworks to be the only up-to-date source for guiding effective teaching and learning. For these reasons, it is imperative that the California Department of Education be permitted to continue with the revision of the History-Social Science and Science Frameworks that are virtually complete and begin the update processes for all other subject areas, as scheduled.

The intent of frameworks is to provide specific guidance and resources teachers to implement quality standards-based instruction. The elimination of the Framework Committees, the disregard for their recommended revisions, and the expectation that teachers use existing frameworks that are vague and outdated in regard to current research, almost assuredly opens the door for instructional mediocrity. It is imperative for the California Department of Education to provide high-quality Curriculum Frameworks to California educators who carry the responsibility of instructional rigor and professional integrity on their shoulders.

Sincerely,



Darline P. Robles, Ph.D.
Superintendent

DPR:mm

cc: Pam Gibbs, LACOE