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MEMORANDUM

Date: July 7, 2010
To: Nevada Superintendents
From: Carol Crothers, Director, APAC
Subject: Grade 8 Writing Assessment changes for the 2010-2011 school year

The Nevada Department of Education is making changes to the Grade 8 Writing Proficiency Exam. Beginning with the spring 2011 administration, eighth grade students will be assessed using two expository writing prompts and they will no longer write to a narrative prompt. One prompt will ask students to write an explanation and the second will ask them to write a response to a question/answer, cause/effect, compare/contrast, or problem/solution prompt. These modes of writing are all currently part of the eighth grade English Language Arts Standards (2007). Nevada's ELA standards are available at http://nde.doe.nv.gov/Standards_EnglishLangArts_Standards.html.

Administration of the Grade 8 Writing Proficiency Exam will be similar to the procedures used for the high school exam. Students will write to both prompts in one sitting. Although the exam is untimed, we recommend a minimum of 120 uninterrupted minutes beginning in the morning. Answer documents for the eighth grade exam will be similar to the high school answer documents. Districts will administer the exam on one day, in one sitting, during the usual testing window and may select one other day for makeup administration.

Eighth grade exams will be scored holistically using the new rubric entitled Nevada Writing Proficiency Exam Grade 8 Holistic Rubric. District Testing Directors and Curriculum Directors received this rubric and supporting materials earlier this year. The rubric is available at http://nde.doe.nv.gov/Assessment_WA.htm.

There are minimal changes to the fifth grade and high school writing exams. High School students will write to expository and persuasive prompts and will no longer write to a narrative prompt. Schools and districts will no longer be permitted to photocopy any answer documents associated with the writing exam. This change in policy unifies the administration of all of the assessments from the Nevada Department of Education, including the Criterion Referenced Test, High School Proficiency Exam, and Writing Proficiency Exam.

For more information, please see our website (http://nde.doe.nv.gov/Assessment_WA.htm), contact the Assessment, Program Accountability and Curriculum (APAC) office (775.687.9213), or email Bobbie Paul at bpaul@doe.nv.gov.

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