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MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendent, Principals, Curriculum Coordinators, Special Education
Administrators and Independent Schools
FROM: Rebecca Holcombe, Ed.D., Secretary of Education *RH*
CC: VSA, VSBA, VPA, VCSEA
SUBJECT: Smarter Balanced Assessment testing window
DATE: March 10, 2017

From March 14th and through June 16th, the Smarter Balanced Assessment testing window will be open for Vermont students across the state. Schools will have approximately three months to complete the assessment, including three weeks in early June to complete any make-up testing. This testing window provides schools increased flexibility to design an assessment schedule that best meets their current needs.

The Smarter Balanced Assessment is designed to assess students' mastery of the Common Core State Standards and the results provide additional data points for local schools to reflect on student progress. Additionally, the assessment provides both local and state stakeholders an opportunity to make statewide inferences about the overall progress and performance of Vermont schools and specific subgroups.

This year marks the third year of students participating in the Smarter Balanced Assessment. Unlike the two previous administrations of the assessment, the results from this year's test will be used for accountability purposes as required by Vermont and federal laws. During the past two years, scores have been reported to the public, but not used for accountability determinations. As such, schools may feel there is heightened importance related to encouraging students to try their best on the assessment.

We encourage you to keep in mind the purpose of testing: to inform improvement of our systems and to ensure all children graduate with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in the civic life of our communities and the economic life of the state. Not everything that matters is tested, and a child who does not score well is not necessarily going to experience poor life outcomes. On average, however, students who score higher possess greater skills, and we know that without the ability to read and write and reason quantitatively, our children have limited prospects beyond school. Please join with me to make sure every child has access to robust, engaging learning and to make sure all children, including our most vulnerable, are challenged and supported. If we do that, we can trust that higher scores will follow.

This spring the Agency will continue to provide expedited reporting of student results. This information can support teachers in data-based decision making and allow school leaders to analyze school-wide results. Just as last year, the Agency requires that school leaders honor the

embargo on public reporting until all schools have completed testing. The Agency will provide further information when results can be publicly shared.

The information obtained from the Smarter Balanced Assessment provides valuable insight into the impact of our programs and how students are progressing in relation to Vermont's learning standards. While no single test can measure the variety of variables that makes a school successful, the knowledge and skills associated with ELA and Math are paramount to later success. I appreciate your support in administering the Smarter Balanced Assessment with fidelity and in ways that provide all students the best opportunity to demonstrate their current level of proficiency in our State standards.