

Feds, Calif. at odds over education testing

By Sharon Noguchi, San Jose Mercury News

Reinforcing its threat to punish California for dumping its old standardized state tests next spring, the U.S. Department of Education said that decision could cost the state at least \$3.5 billion.

The state could lose \$15 million it receives to administer a federal program for poor children, known as Title I. More critically, a letter sent Tuesday by Deborah S. Delisle, an assistant secretary of education, hinted California risks significantly more money from other federal initiatives, for the lowest-performing schools, English-language learners, disabled students, rural schools, migrant children and teacher training. Those totaled about \$3.5 billion last school year.

The dispute between state and federal education officials boils down to whether students need to take standardized tests in English and math every year, and whether the public should be able to see those results. Federal officials say the law requires that, but California believes that's unreasonable.

State Board of Education President Michael Kirst said he was surprised that federal authorities would send a threatening letter. He and members of the California Department of Education have been meeting with U.S. officials about reconciling California's new testing regimen with federal law.

He characterized the talks as constructive. "I don't believe we are stuck at all."

The federal threat comes as California begins major changes to the way it teaches K-12 students. It has adopted a new standard for learning called Common Core, which is intended to

offer practical and relevant lessons, teaching students to think critically and solve problems.

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