Dear Principals,

I hope this e-mail finds you having some time to breathe after closing a year full of precipitation in various forms and the roll-out of numerous changes to the way we will conduct educational business here in Kentucky.  Over the last few weeks, we have had several phone calls and questions from principals, understandably so.  As a former high school principal, I understand the anxiety this process is creating for many of you, as you are plan PD for your staff.  The new changes and expectations are extensive and we need all the answers and help we can get!  I truly believe planning and collaboration will be key to the effective implementation of this work!

At this time, I do have some information regarding End of Course Assessments and *QualityCore* to share with you.

Here is what we know at OVEC:

1.      There are 12 courses total available through *QualityCore* from ACT. Kentucky is purchasing four of those courses: English II, Algebra II, US History, and Biology.

2.      Included in each of those four courses:

**Rigorous Course Standards**

**Instructional Resources**

                        **Educator's Guide**

**Course Objectives**

**Course Description and Syllabus**

**Course Outline and Instructional Unit Plan**

**Test Blueprints**

**Guideline for Developing Instructional Units**

**Model Instructional Units**

**Formative Item Pool**

                        More than 250 questions per course mapped to course standards

                        Online interactive test builder for customized assessments

                        Comprised of both multiple-choice and constructed-response questions, filterable by difficulty

                        Developed by teachers and subject to ACT's rigorous standards End-of-Course Assessment

                        Online and paper-based delivery

                        Multiple-choice and Constructed-response formats

                        90-minute test can be administered in two periods Progress Monitoring

                        Interactive online reporting

                        Longitudinal data tracking included

            **Every end-of-course exam includes an estimated PLAN/ACT sub score Professional Development** (NOTE: this is what is standard; still finalizing what PD will include in KY)

                        Tutorials for self-guided preparation

                        Facilitated, face-to-face, multi-session development opportunities

                        incorporates proven instructional strategies

3.      ***If you choose to purchase any of the other 8 End of Course Assessments, the same materials above will be included.  No more, no less***.  There was some confusion that when schools purchased other EOC Assessments, for courses beyond the 4 provided they would have access to all units.  Each course has 1 sample unit as a guide.  The resources and materials are designed to support your work in designing the other units of study.

4.      The cost for **End of Course Assessments**:  (Keep in mind, you are purchasing the assessments and you receive the resources).  *There is no cost quote for the courses, it is per student based on EOC Assessments purchased*.  This is the state negotiated price with ACT:

**$17.25/student for Multiple Choice**

**$21.25/student for Constructed Response**

5.      PD for *QualityCore*  work is still a work in progress with Kentucky.  Many of you have expressed an interest in scheduling/arranging the PD that Spencer County received.  That contract for PD was offered by a Third Party Vendor who is no longer offering the PD.  This is not an option at this point.  However, KDE and ACT are working to determine what PD will look like for Kentucky to best meet the needs of our district.  OVEC as a cooperative will support our districts in this work.  We are keeping in constant contact with ACT for updates on the status of the plan and potential opportunities for our region.  ***It is our intent at OVEC to provide our region with PD, per the request of our district representatives.  We hope this will allow us to collaborate in the work and keep costs at a manageable level for our districts.***

6.      How do we access the resources for the four End of Course Assessments purchased by the state?  This is also in the process of being worked out, according to ACT.  We will continue to try and get information on this request, but to date are being told that the plan is in the works to get passwords out to districts for access to these resources for your PD and summer work in preparation for this monumental work next year.

7.      This came from the DAC e-mail this week…another common question, so I thought I would include in this e-mail.

**QUESTION OF THE WEEK**

**Q.                   How are Kentucky standards incorporated in end-of-course assessments for high schools?**

**A.                   In February 2010, Kentucky became the first state to adopt the Common Core standards for English/language arts, and mathematics.  These Common Core standards have been incorporated into Kentucky’s Core Academic Standards (KCAS).  Throughout the 2010-2011 school year, Kentucky teachers and administrators have worked to deconstruct the new standards and begin implementation in the classroom.  The KCAS reflects the breadth and depth of content that should be the basis for curriculum in Kentucky’s public schools.**

**As well as calling for revised content standards, legislation in the 2009 Kentucky General Assembly called for a new assessment and accountability program in the 2011-2012 school year. The Kentucky Board of Education approved a new end-of-course (EOC) assessment program for high schools.  This component of the new assessment system will begin in 2011-2012 with assessments in four courses—Algebra II, English II, Biology and U.S. History. The *QualityCore®* from ACT, Inc. was selected as the provider for the four required assessments. *QualityCore®* is a nationally respected rigorous program. Student results will provide important links to other ACT, Inc. college readiness assessments (i.e., PLAN or the ACT) and national norms.**

**Consistent with past experience, Kentucky’s required assessments will continue to sample a subset of standards during each test administration.  With the purchase of *QualityCore®,* Kentucky educators receive access to a variety of resources including course syllabi, objectives, formative item banks and benchmark assessments.  All of the resources help define the course rigor and expectations that will be sampled during administration of the *QualityCore®* EOC exams.**

**While Kentucky requires students to take the *QualityCore®* EOC exams, the Commonwealth does not require teachers to use the *QualityCore®* educator resources.  These resources are available to support teachers as they implement KCAS and local curriculum.  The *QualityCore®* resources for Algebra II, English II, Biology and U.S. History may provide an important supplement for the four required courses.  The four sets of *QualityCore®* educator resources do not provide a complete coverage of the depth and breadth of the Kentucky’s curriculum standards (i.e., KCAS).**

**Kentucky will continue to examine the connections between the *QualityCore®* program and KCAS to assist Kentucky educators as they implement both new standards and a new assessment.   High correlation exists between: Kentucky's Core Academic Standards for English and Mathematics, Kentucky's Program of Studies(POS), Core Content 4.1 for Science and Social Studies, and the College Readiness Standards incorporated in *QualityCore®*. The KCAS and POS/Core Content 4.1 contain some areas not covered by *QualityCore®* and the *QualityCore®* educator resources purchased by Kentucky may contain some content not included in KCAS and POS. KDE staff will work to identify the areas of difference. KDE staff have drafted course frameworks for Algebra II and English II; they are provided in the following attachments.**

Traditional Pathway Algebra II Appendix Y KCAS and QC - final draft June 2011.pdfEnglish 2 overview KCAS and Core June 2011.pdf

**Over the next few months, these course frameworks will be enhanced.**

**For questions, contact the Kentucky Department of Education, Division of Support and Research, at 502-564-4394 or** **dacinfo@education.ky.gov**

8.      **Please, please, please don’t hesitate to give us a call with any questions you may have or support you may need in your school or district.**  We have the highest regard for the work you are doing for the children in Kentucky with the extensive change we are experiencing.  There is great opportunity ahead for the students of Kentucky.  We will certainly need to support each other and collaborate to achieve the highest levels of success for our students being served in our Public School System.  **Thanks for your commitment to students and your positive influence on the implementation of this work!**

Yours in education, Shannon

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***"To give anything less than your BEST, is to Sacrifice the Gift..."***

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