

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

High School Assessment Issues

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 158.6451; 703 KAR 5:200, Next-Generation Learners; 703 KAR 5:240, Accountability Definitions and Procedures; and 703 KAR 3:305, Minimum Requirements for High School Graduation

History/Background:

Existing Policy. KRS 158.6451 (Senate Bill 1), passed by the 2009 Kentucky General Assembly, established multiple assessment requirements and charged the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) to create a new accountability system to classify districts and schools. With the guidance and approval of the KBE, the accountability model, Unbridled Learning: College- and Career-Readiness for All, offers a balanced approach organized around the KBE's four strategic priorities of next-generation learners, professionals, support systems and schools/districts.

KRS 158.6451 requires either an End-of-Year (EOY) test or an End-of-Course (EOC) test in high school. EOY models require all students in a grade level (e.g., grade 10) to take a summative test at the end of year in the subjects of reading, mathematics, science, social studies and writing. EOC models require students to complete a test at the end of a specific course no matter the grade level of the student (e.g., Algebra II).

In addition, the statute requires: (1) a grade 8 test that provides information to students about their readiness for high school, (2) a grade 10 college readiness test that provides information to the students about their readiness for the upcoming ACT test, and (3) a grade 11 ACT test. Also, the statute requires that the state assessment window be a five-day time period within the last 14 days of a district's calendar.

Current Issues

As the assessment system has evolved over the last two years, issues have emerged at the high school level.

- The ACT EXPLORE and the ACT PLAN tests will no longer be available after fall of 2014. Currently, the last scheduled administration for ACT EXPLORE and ACT PLAN will occur in September 2014.
- The ACT QualityCore End-of-Course (EOC) assessment program continues to have substantial alignment and online testing problems. The original plan called for adding up to 12 EOC tests; however, budget limitations have prevented the addition

of EOC tests. Currently, the four tests used in the EOC model do not fully cover the high school Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS).

To begin the process, staff will present some options and questions for discussion with the KBE.

Key Questions

- What should the Kentucky high school testing model look like? (End-of-Year or End-of-Course)
- How should Kentucky replace the ACT EXPLORE and ACT PLAN tests?
- What timeline should be followed for the work?

Options – For End-of-Year Testing

Option A

- Replace the end-of-course assessment model with a summative, end-of-year testing model that provides broader coverage of the Kentucky Core Academic Standards at the high school level; this test would go into effect in 2014-15. The summative assessment would be given at the end of the year to all grade 10 students in the subjects of reading, mathematics, writing, science and social studies.
- Require the end-of-year results of the high school assessment mentioned above to provide the information required by the ACT PLAN test. The end-of-year test would, in essence, function as a single test meeting two requirements.
- Use the current K-PREP middle school tests to provide the information required as a part of the ACT EXPLORE test. The K-PREP test would in essence function as a single test meeting two requirements. K-PREP grades 3-8 standard setting work used the distribution of students on the ACT scale; therefore, a score of Proficiency or Distinguished at grade 8 on the K-PREP test indicates the student is on track for meeting the ACT benchmarks and is ready for challenging high school courses.

Pros: Creates a better and more thorough alignment of the high school assessment system with the Kentucky Core Academic Standards and college readiness. Eliminates ongoing problems with the current EOC online system and saves an estimated \$2 million dollars.

Cons: Accountability trend lines end and must start over; high school curriculum and instruction must be adapted for the new assessment model at the beginning of the 2014-15 school year. Vendors who will have a product ready by spring 2015 will be limited. Student motivation becomes an issue because EOY test results are usually not available in a timely fashion and the link between an EOY test and a specific course is very difficult to determine.

Option B

- Adopt Option A above; however, implement it in the 2015-16 school year.

Pros: Same pros listed above and schools continue summer 2014 professional development and 2014-15 instruction/curriculum. Schools have advance notice of upcoming instructional/curriculum changes coming in 2015-16. Trend data stays intact for a fourth year. More vendors would have testing products by 2015-16. The phase-in will meet regulatory timelines.

Cons: Accountability trend lines start over in 2015-16 school year. The delay pushes out changes an extra year. EOC online issues may or may not be solved by spring 2015, the final year of administration of EOC. Student motivation becomes an issue because EOY test results are usually not available in a timely fashion and the link between an EOY test and a specific course is very difficult to determine.

Option C

- Option C is a hybrid of A and B above. Replace the grade 10 ACT PLAN test with an end-of-year summative test as discussed in Options A and B. The new grade 10 test would go into effect in 2014-15; however, EOC continues one last time in 2014-15.
- Use the current K-PREP middle school tests to provide the information required as a part of the ACT EXPLORE test.
- In 2015-16, the grade 10 EOY summative would replace the EOC as described in Options A and B above.

Pros: Allows phase-in of new test; schools can make instructional/curriculum adjustments; and the new test gets a one-year try out to determine its logistical and instructional feasibility. The option would increase savings in 2015-16. This option would provide a fourth year of trend data for accountability. The phase-in will meet regulatory timelines.

Cons: Accountability trend lines start over in 2015-16 school year. The delay pushes out changes an extra year. The option has a slight increase in cost in 2014-15. In 2015-16, student motivation becomes an issue because EOY test results are usually not available in a timely fashion and the link between an EOY test and a specific course is very difficult to determine.

Options – For End-of-Course Testing

Option D

- Continue with the EOC testing model; find a replacement for the ACT EXPLORE/PLAN.

- May need to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to address both increased coverage of standards and online issues. Or, KDE may add more EOC courses and associated tests in the existing contract to provide more coverage of standards.
- Replace the grade 10 ACT PLAN test with fall testing schedule.
- Either use middle school K-PREP tests to provide the information required by the ACT EXPLORE test, or select a replacement test for the ACT EXPLORE.

Pros: Provides for less disruption to the high school work. Continues accountability and keeps current curriculum/instruction intact. If courses are added, it improves content coverage. This option maintains student motivation for state tests. It meets regulatory timelines.

Cons: Increased cost of adding more EOC tests occurs. Alignment to standards may remain a problem due to limited coverage of EOC subjects. May need to move to using another state's EOC tests or create custom EOC tests.

Discussion of Timeline for Regulations

Three of the options will call for revisions to existing regulations. If there is a decision to adopt a new model of testing in the 2014-15 school year, there are some regulatory concerns related to timing. End-of-course tests and the ACT EXPLORE and ACT PLAN are written into three state regulations: (1) 703 KAR 5:200, Next-Generation Learners, (2) 703 KAR 5:240, Accountability Definitions and Procedures and (3) 703 KAR 3:305, Minimum Requirements for High School Graduation. In order to make the new assessment model operational for the 2014-15 school year, an RFP process and selection of the new assessments would need to be completed in the summer of 2014. The regulatory process, with its required timelines, could not be completed prior to the RFP process, thus resulting in the regulation lagging behind the RFP process. It is permissible for this to occur, assuming the KBE understands both the intent of the RFP process and the regulation; however, the timing of the regulation under this scenario would result in the regulation not becoming effective until the middle of the 2014-15 school year, at the earliest. This scenario gives us very little room for error if the regulation receives numerous comments or if it were to be found deficient. If the new regulations were not approved through the entire regulatory process, then the new testing program would not be approved even though the testing program would have started pursuant to the RFP.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

The new accountability system establishes how schools/districts are held responsible for ensuring Kentucky's students are proficient and prepared for success. The revised regulations improve the high school testing model to ensure Kentucky educational standards are taught and tested.

Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:

The School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council (SCAAC), the District Assessment Coordinators (DAC) Advisory Group as well as the Local Superintendents Advisory Council and other stakeholder groups will discuss the proposed changes. Any feedback that is received prior to the April KBE meeting will be shared at the meeting.

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Commissioner of Education

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