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Welcome back to school!



With another school year ahead of us full of great challenges and wonderful achievements, we would like to remind you of the awesome power of positive thinking.

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Thank you for allowing us to support your efforts to help your students build confidence and take their academic success to its highest level.

Best wishes,
Cindi Englefield
President and CEO

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States commit to create common academic standards

A shift to common national academic standards may soon be a reality. The draft of proposed national reading and mathematics standards begins its 30-day comment period after the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) revised its first draft and released its latest version on September 22.

In the first draft of common core standards for graduation (for students in grades 9–12), CCSSI has spelled out standards for reading informational and literary texts, writing, speaking and listening, and all areas of mathematics. To help educators implement the new standards in their classrooms, it lists sample reading texts, sample mathematics problems, and sample reading and mathematics tests. It also describes practical applications of the standards and lists the research and evidence that was used in forming the draft.

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) heads the initiative to create common core standards for all states. The purpose of the initiative is to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for college and for competing in a 21st century workforce.

During a meeting in April with the NGA and CCSSO, the governors and chief education officers from 46 states signed a memorandum of agreement committing to the development of voluntary, common standards. During the summer, Missouri and South Carolina joined the movement, leaving just two holdouts: Texas, which recently updated its standards, and Alaska, where officials are reportedly reserving their judgment.

Once the standards are agreed on, each state that signed the memorandum must make 85 percent of its standards national common core academic standards, and these standards must be adopted within three years.

The move to national K–12 standards has been largely supported by President Barack Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. The administration is planning a \$350 million grant competition to encourage states to adopt common, high-quality standards and develop tests based on them.

For the next 30 days, experts will collect comments on the draft of common core standards. In 2010, the CCSSI plans to write grade-by-grade standards from kindergarten through the remaining grades. There is no guarantee that states will adopt the final set of common core standards.



The purpose of the initiative is to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for college and for competing in a 21st century workforce.

Colorado joins multi-state effort to develop common core standards, revises own content standards

Colorado Governor Bill Ritter and Colorado Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones have pledged to join a state-led effort to create a common core of standards in English and Mathematics from kindergarten through 12th grade. Forty-eight states and three U.S. territories have committed to the process.

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers are working together to develop the common core standards that:

- are based on research,
- are aligned with the college and workforce readiness definitions,
- include rigorous content and skills, and
- are internationally benchmarked.

According to Governor Ritter, the common core standards will be developed to improve and maintain the competitive advantage of students graduating from schools in the United States. "This effort clearly complements Colorado's agenda," Ritter emphasized. "I'm thrilled that so many other states are taking seriously the need to develop standards and assessments that are aligned with postsecondary and workforce readiness expectations."

Colorado's Standards Revisions

Commissioner Jones said the multi-state agreement merges smoothly with his state's ongoing effort to revise and update Colorado's content standards. Under the existing timetable, adoption of the updated standards by the Colorado State Board of Education is scheduled for December 2009.

According to the Colorado Department of Education's Unit of Academic Standards, Colorado is transitioning from traditional kindergarten through 12th grade standards to an inclusion of early school readiness and postsecondary competencies. Historically, these standards have been organized by grade spans but are evolving to more articulated and specific descriptions.

New Colorado state standards will reflect workforce readiness and 21st century skills, such as problem-solving, information literacy, and innovation. The standards will focus on the student's ability to take responsibility for additional learning, self direction, and interaction with others to learn new information quickly and more naturally.

The Unit of Academic Standard's revision process started with research and analysis of benchmarked states and nations with the best standards. A study was commissioned to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the existing Colorado standards. Then, a stakeholder advisory group was assembled to help define terms, frame the issues, determine grade by grade articulation, and select 255 members who were divided into subject-specific subcommittees.

Each subcommittee takes into consideration the research, gap analyses, reports on best benchmarked states and nations, the 21st century skills, and a draft of the postsecondary and workforce readiness description in order to revise the content standards of Colorado.

Standards will be analyzed and drafts submitted by content subcommittees in three phases:

Phase I: Mathematics, Science, Reading/ Writing, and Music;

Phase II: History, Civics, Geography and Economics; and

Phase III: Visual Arts, Theatre, Dance, Health and Physical Education, and World Language.

Official public hearings will be this November before the State Board of Education when the final recommendations of the proposed Colorado standards are presented. The State Board of Education will decide what standards are to be adopted in December.



Florida moves to Next Generation Standards

The Florida State Board of Education (FDOE) is continuing its review and revision of the current Florida Sunshine State Standards to the new Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.

According to the Florida Department of Education, the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards are designed to prepare Florida's students to effectively engage, communicate, and compete globally with students around the world. Florida's new standards will incorporate important skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, innovation, collaboration, and communication.

The revisions to the Sunshine State Standards were driven by the Florida legislature's quest to increase the rigor of public education and enhance the competitiveness of Florida's graduates. The State Board of Education is required to review the Sunshine State Standards and replace them by December 31, 2011, with the new Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.

According to the legislation, the new Next Generation Sunshine State Standards must:

- be rigorous,
- provide increased content specificity, and
- establish grade-by-grade expectations in kindergarten through eighth grade for language arts, science, math, and social studies.

The legislation also mandates that high school standards for language arts, science, math, and social studies must be aligned with expectations for college success and high-skill, high-wage employment. The Commissioner of Education is required to develop the proposed standards in consultation with curricular content experts, Florida teachers, and other stakeholders.

The Florida Department of Education is committed to changing the culture of its schools from Pre-K to postsecondary by "raising the ceiling and raising the floor to better enable our students for success in the 21st century."

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There are six strategic areas of focus in the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards:

1. Strengthen foundation skills,
2. Improve quality of teaching in the education system,
3. Improve college and career readiness,
4. Expand opportunities for postsecondary degrees and certificates,
5. Improve K-12 educational choice options, and
6. Align resources to strategic goals.

To date, the current reading content standards (adopted in January 2007), mathematics content standards (adopted in September 2007), and science content standards (adopted in February 2008) meet the specified requirements for Next Generation Sunshine State Standards and will not be revised again before December 2011. Social studies, health education, and physical education standards also meet the requirements to be Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.

The content standards for language arts (adopted in January 2007) must be revised and replaced to comply with new requirements, specifically identifying significant literary genres and authors that encompass a comprehensive range of historical periods.

Although assessment realignment began in 2007, the new generation of tests to reflect the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards will not be administered until 2011 (reading and mathematics) and 2012 (science). Meanwhile, schools will continue to administer the current FCAT.



For a comprehensive chart outlining the timeline of the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, go to the Florida Department of Education website at

http://www.fldoe.org/board/meetings/2008_06_17/Next%20Gen%20Stan.pdf



2008–2009 Ohio report cards show positive gains



Newly released 2008–2009 Ohio School Report Cards by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) show strong gains by Ohio students in academic achievement categories.

According to the ODE, the performance index, which measures the achievement of every student, not just those who score proficient or higher, increased by more than 26%, from 73.7% in 1999–2000 to 92.9% this year. Among the highlights of this year’s Ohio report card results:

- Slightly more than 85% of all districts received one of the top three ratings of Effective, Excellent, or Excellent with Distinction.
- 71% of school buildings received ratings of Effective or higher.
- There are 116 districts and 215 schools that have earned the Excellent with Distinction designation.
- More than 88% of the school districts met or exceeded the value-added standard.

“Educators continue to help students achieve at higher levels and, in many cases, surpass the rigorous academic standards that have been laid before them,” commented Deborah S. Delisle, Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction. “More districts have earned a rating of Effective or higher on their 2008–2009 report cards than in previous years.”

The value-added category of the School Report Card, which measures how much progress was made since the prior year in the subjects of reading and math for all districts and for schools that serve students in at least one grade between four and eight was less encouraging:

- Forty-nine districts and 440 school buildings saw a decrease in their designation.
- Eighty-nine districts received a rating of Continuous Improvement or lower, a decrease of 3% from last year.
- Fourteen districts and 59 schools fell into “below expected growth” in the value-added rating.
- Youngstown is the only school district in Ohio to be assigned a rating of Academic Emergency.



Ohio Academic Content Standards revision process is underway

According to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Ohio's Academic Content Standards revision process continues to move forward. Content specialists in the ODE's Office of Curriculum and Instruction are working with educational and community groups, teachers and curriculum leaders, content specialists and experts, interested stakeholders, and the public in putting together a proposed draft of the new Academic Content Standards.

The standards revision process began with an international benchmarking research study, which focused on the content standards of top performing nations, to identify best practices from around the world. Other sources for the revision will include expert reviews of the current standards, college- and career-readiness standards, and local stakeholder input.

Several themes, according to the ODE, are emerging as they prepare for the revisions. Potential changes to the standards include:

- Organizing the standards by topic and theme;
- Clarifying the progression of topics across grades;
- Reducing the content to be more manageable and to promote greater depth of learning;
- Supporting the standards with model curricula that include clarifications for instruction, instructional resources and learning expectations; and
- Infusing 21st century skills.

The ODE released the following Academic Content Standards revision timeline, which includes completed work and ongoing work through April 2010:

June 2009 – Stakeholder input began with meetings of education organizations, discussion groups with people interested in the standards revision, and input from teachers for each content area. There are 50 participants per content area who represent various grade levels, types of districts, regions, and demographics of the state.

July 2009 – The ODE collected feedback on the Web about the revision process. The ODE also held advisory committee meetings to gather perspectives on key points.

August and September, 2009 – The ODE is utilizing working groups to help to prepare the draft, which will be available in November.

November 2009 – The ODE will release the working draft standards to the public for input via the Web and focus groups.

January and February, 2010 – Revisions will be made to the proposed content standards based on public input. These proposed draft standards will then be edited for publication.

March or April, 2010 – The Board process of review of the proposed Academic Content Standards begins.

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The revisions to the Academic Content Standards and model curricula development will occur in two phases. Phase I standards will include mathematics, English language arts, science, and social studies. Phase II standards will review world languages, fine arts, business education, computer literacy, and financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

Standards Revision for English Language Arts

The goal of the English language arts standards revision is to ensure that the standards are more manageable and accessible to educators, are aligned with international and national standards, and prepare students to successfully operate in a global environment. In June, stakeholder meetings were convened to discuss the standards revision and to elicit valued feedback from the field. Stakeholders from these meetings offered the following suggestions:

- Streamline the standards to reflect the essential concepts and skills;
- Web-based format needs to be easy to navigate;
- Standards should have more depth;
- Professional development is vital both before and after the standards are rolled out; and
- Content Statements within the strands should be presented side by side.

In addition, the English Language Arts Advisory Committee met in July and addressed the following topics:

- Structure of the revised standards;
- Professional development should be held before and after the standards are rolled out;
- Interdisciplinary connections; and
- 21st century skills—Standards and Model Curriculum.

Standards Revision for Mathematics

An update on the revision of Ohio's mathematics standards will be presented during the 59th Annual Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics (OCTM) Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio, November 12–14, 2009.

Standards Revision for Science

According to the ODE, the Ohio Academic Content Standards science revision process is moving forward to make Ohio's science standards more accessible

and manageable for educators, to ensure alignment with both national and international standards, and to contribute to student success in today's global environment.

The revised science standards, the ODE announced, will be a dynamic, Web-based document with content statements that reflect the core knowledge and fundamental principles of each discipline. Organized by themes and topics, these statements will indicate what should be taught at each grade level and reflect content expectations in both national and international documents. An Instructional Strategies and Learning Expectations section will include clarifications of content statements, model curricula, give examples of cognitive demands, provide easy access to supplemental material that teachers can use to support instruction, and use real-world examples of how to incorporate essential skills into lessons that integrate with other disciplines.

The revised science content standards will reinforce connections and learning progressions; indicators will be eliminated; and the three process standards, Science and Technology, Scientific Inquiry, and Scientific Ways of Knowing, will be integrated into the discipline standards, with an emphasis on inquiry-based instruction.

Standards Revision for Social Studies

The social studies discussion group identified and discussed how teachers want a reduced amount of content; clarity and specific detail; and clearly shown connections among the strands within a grade level. The group discussed scope and sequence proposals for middle grades and indicated that testing content from entire grade bands in grades five and eight is a concern.

According to the ODE, the Social Studies Advisory Committee met and discussed:

- Adjustments to scope and sequence in grades 4–6 to include more emphasis on geography of Eastern and Western Hemispheres in grades 5 and 6;
- Inclusion of Financial Literacy; and
- High school course frameworks.



Ohio Assessment Updates: House Bill 1

Governor Ted Strickland signed Ohio House Bill 1 in July. Changes to the Assessment programs were agreed to by the legislature; however, no timeline for implementing the changes has been determined. According to the ODE, once a timeline for implementation is established, it will be communicated to all.

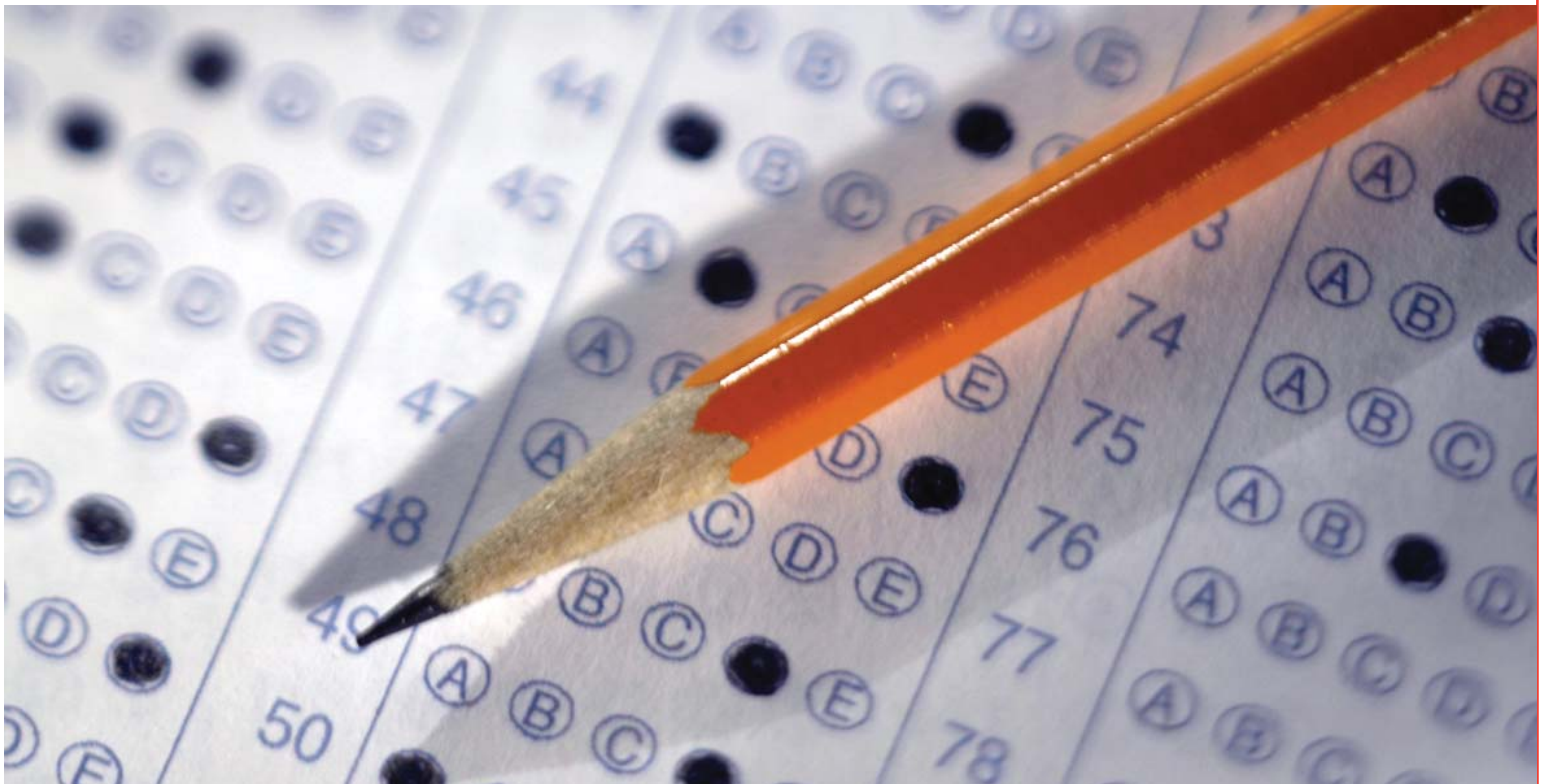
The following actions have been taken as a result of cuts to the ODE assessment budget:

- Grades 4 and 7 writing and grades 5 and 8 social studies assessments are suspended for two years;
- Fall regional assessment meetings are canceled;
- The availability of a breach form for the Ohio Achievement Test (OAT) is currently being discussed;
- Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) items will not be subject to public release beginning with the spring 2010 OGT administration.

In addition, the budget bill calls for development of a new assessment system to replace the current Ohio Graduation Tests with a three-part assessment system:

- A nationally standardized assessment (science, mathematics, and English language arts);
- A series of end-of-course exams (science, mathematics, English language arts, and social studies); and
- A senior project (student or group of students are assessed on chosen content and skills).

This three-part assessment system will be used to comprise a composite score for graduation. ODE is working on the details and a timeline for this transition to take place. For the current year, there is no change to the OGT assessment schedule.



Considerable changes made to Texas testing, accountability system

With the passage of House Bill 3, modifications to the state's testing and accountability systems are falling in place. The legislation calls for revisions to the high school graduation programs and places sanctions on campuses and districts with consistently low test scores or graduation rates.

Under House Bill 3, Texas' Student Success Initiative (SSI) was amended to eliminate the requirement that students in third grade must pass the Reading Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) in order to be promoted to fourth grade. The legislation, however, retained the requirement that fifth and eighth grade students must pass the Reading and Mathematics TAKS to be promoted.

According to the law, if a student fails any TAKS test in grades 3–8, school districts are required to provide the student with accelerated instruction. A student may be required to participate in this extra instruction outside the normal school hours or school year. Previously, accelerated instruction was only required for students who fail TAKS in SSI grades and subjects.

Students who fail the Mathematics or Reading TAKS in fifth or eighth grade must complete the accelerated instruction in order to be promoted. The following year those students must be assigned to a highly qualified teacher in the subject in which the student failed the TAKS.

House Bill 3 requires a redesign of the current testing program in grades 3–8. The law requires tests in which a student's score will be used to measure the student's performance as well as growth in academic achievement from grade to grade.

The bill also gives the Commissioner of Education the responsibility to set the overall passing standards for Texas assessments. Previously, the State Board of Education set the passing criteria.

This includes setting the passing requirements on the new End-of-Course (EOC) assessments. In addition to the cumulative score requirement, students on the Recommended High School Program must pass the Algebra II and English III EOC exams as part of their graduation requirements. Students on the Distinguished Achievement Program must meet the college readiness performance measures on these two assessments.

Additional changes to the testing program under House Bill 3 include:

- The elimination of the sixth grade Spanish-language TAKS due to its limited usage.
- The elimination of mandatory production of study guides for students who fail the TAKS.
- The prohibition of requiring the administration of certain state assessments online.
- The creation of a secure assessment Web site that allows parents and students to access their own testing data. Authorized school district employees and college or university employees will also be allowed to access this information.



To learn more about all the changes to Texas testing and accountability, the complete text of House Bill 3 is available at <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>

Eighty percent of Texas schools and districts meet AYP TAKS passing rates increase on every subject, at every grade

The Texas Education Agency announced that eighty percent of Texas schools and districts met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards required by No Child Left Behind. This year, 992 school districts earned the “Meets AYP” label, up from 824 or 67 percent of the districts in 2008.

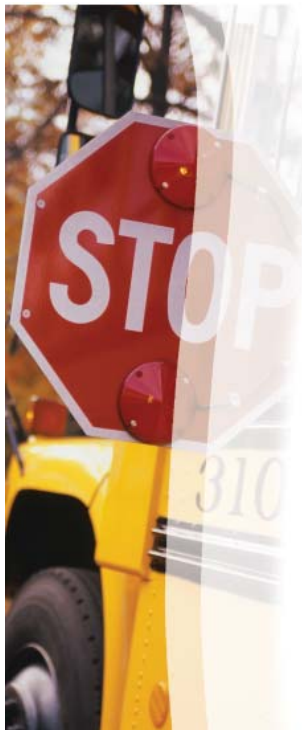
The percentage of schools that achieved this designation rose from 75 percent in 2008 to 80 percent in 2009. This year, 6,696 campuses earned the “Meets AYP” designation, compared to 6,170 last year.

The federal evaluations of AYP are based on:

- Participation and passing rates on the Mathematics and English Language Arts/Reading TAKS for grades 3–8 and 10;
- Graduation rates for high schools and districts; and
- Attendance rates for elementary and middle schools.

Along with acceptable test performance, districts and high schools must also meet a 70 percent graduation rate or show improvement over the previous year. Elementary and middle schools must have an attendance rate of 90 percent or higher to meet AYP requirements.

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According to Texas Commissioner of Education Robert Scott, “The passing standards are beginning to rise sharply as school districts work to reach the No Child Left Behind mandate that 100 percent of students pass their math and reading tests by 2014. Districts had to significantly increase passing rates in reading and mathematics this year just to maintain a ‘Meets AYP’ designation.”

The testing information for the federal evaluations is based on results from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), TAKS (Accommodated), TAKS-Modified (TAKS–M), and TAKS-Alternate (TAKS–Alt) assessments.

In 2009, 18 percent of the districts (or 218) received a “Missed AYP” compared to 32% (or 391) that fell short in 2008. At the campus level, 5% of schools (or 391) received a “Missed AYP” in 2009 compared to 14% (or 1,109) last year.

According to the Texas Education Agency, two percent of the districts and 15 percent of the campuses were not rated for a variety of reasons, such as extended closure due to Hurricane Ike or they did not serve students in grades 3–8 and 10. The most common reasons that a campus received a “Missed AYP” designation were mathematics performance and graduation rates.

In spite of disruptions, passing rates on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test increased on every subject and at every grade level in 2009.



TAKS 2009 Passing Scores

Grade	Reading/ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies	Writing
3	93%*	84%	X	X	X
3 Spanish	83%	77%	X	X	X
4	84%	86%	X	X	91%
4 Spanish	80%	78%	X	X	91%
5	89%*	90%*	84%	X	X
5 Spanish	68%	45%	43%	X	X
6	91%	80%	X	X	X
6 Spanish	75%	63%	X	X	X
7	84%	79%	X	X	X
8	95%*	84%*	72%	92%	X
9	87%	67%	X	X	X
10	88%	65%	66%	90%	X
Exit Level	92%	81%	85%	97%	X

*Cumulative Reading and Math passing percentages exclude the June/July retest.
X = The subject is not tested at this grade level.

Source for TAKS passing scores:
July 2009 *Texas Education Today*.

\$2 billion in federal stabilization funds approved for Texas schools

According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), about \$2 billion in federal stabilization funds will begin flowing to Texas schools as the new school year begins. Texas' spending plan for the funds was approved by the U.S. Department of Education in July. This funding is in addition to about \$1.7 billion in federal education stimulus funds already allocated to Texas.

Commenting on the stabilization funds earmarked for Texas, Texas Commissioner of Education Robert Scott said, "We're pleased that the

Department of Education approved the governor's application. The stabilization and stimulus revenue gives our school districts and charter schools an unprecedented opportunity to fund innovative improvements, and I'm confident our schools will step up and seize this opportunity."

"...I'm confident our schools will step up and seize this opportunity."

Robert Scott
Texas Commissioner
of Education

Commissioner Scott expects the stabilization funds to be distributed to districts beginning September 1, the start of the state's fiscal year. In addition, Texas will be eligible to apply for another \$1 billion in stabilization funds this fall.

According to the TEA, the purpose of the stabilization grant is to provide funding for the support of elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education and, as applicable, early childhood education and other services designed to improve student achievement.

Commissioner Scott said districts and charters are expected to use these funds to promote the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) four essential areas of reform, which the state supports:

- Making improvements in teacher effectiveness and ensuring that all schools have highly qualified teachers;
- Making progress toward college and career-ready standards and rigorous assessments that will improve both teaching and learning;
- Improving achievement in low-performing schools by providing intensive support and effective interventions in schools that need them the most; and
- Gathering information to improve student learning, teacher performance, and college and career-readiness through enhanced data systems that track progress.



TEA will host several technical assistance webinars to assist districts with their Stimulus Fund/Stabilization Fund applications.

Go to

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=4570>
to register for the webinars.

Washington's assessment system undergoes major changes

Washington schools are bracing this school year for sweeping changes in the state's assessment system, replacing the Washington Assessment for Student Learning (WASL) with two new tests: the grades 3–8 Measurements of Student Progress (MSP) and the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE). In addition, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn released preliminary details that transition these new assessments from paper-and-pencil tests to online tests.

According to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), beginning in spring 2010, students will be tested on the new MSP and HSPE. These tests will be shorter; when compared to the WASL, the time it takes to administer them will be cut in half. State Superintendent Dorn announced that voluntary online testing would begin this spring for grades 6–8 in reading and mathematics. The rest of the grades and content areas will be phased in over the next few years, he said. About 25 percent of students statewide in grades 6–8 are expected to participate next spring in voluntary online testing. Online high school testing will not be piloted until 2011 and will be available statewide in 2012. By 2012, the majority of grades and content areas will be online.

OSPI is conducting feasibility studies for online testing in fourth grade writing and all subjects in third grade. For now, third grade will remain a paper-and-pencil test until more information is gathered.

Washington MSP/HSPE Online Testing Phase-In

Spring 2010

Grades 6–8:

Reading and Mathematics (voluntary)

Spring 2011

Grade 5:

Reading, Mathematics, and Science (voluntary)

Grade 6:

Reading and Mathematics (voluntary)

Grade 7:

Reading, Mathematics, and Writing (voluntary)

Grade 8:

Reading, Mathematics, and Science (voluntary)

High school:

Reading, Mathematics, (core exam) and Writing (piloted)

Spring 2012

Grade 4:

Reading and Mathematics

Grade 5:

Reading, Mathematics, and Science

Grade 6:

Reading and Mathematics

Grade 7:

Reading, Mathematics, and Writing

Grade 8:

Reading, Mathematics, and Science

Online testing is voluntary for elementary & middle schools during 2010–2011 but will be required in 2012.

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2010 State Testing Session Times

Grades 3–5:
Single-session
75-minute tests

Grades 6–8:
Single-session
90-minute tests

High school:
Single-session
120-minute tests

Note:
Writing tests still given
in two sessions

The testing window for elementary and middle schools will be moved into May. Schools participating in traditional paper-and-pencil testing will administer the MSP from May 12–28. Schools choosing to participate in the first year of online testing will have a slightly longer testing window (May 3 to June 4). Individual schools can decide whether to volunteer for spring online testing in 2010 and 2011.

According to OSPI, the assessment sessions for reading, mathematics, and science will take one day each. For now, writing will still take two days.

The MSP and HSPE will no longer contain extended-response items (worth four points) and will be constructed of multiple choice, completion items (each worth one point), and short-answer items (worth two points). According to OSPI, existing extended-response items will be broken down into one- and two-point items, when possible. The MSP and HSPE will continue to assess students on the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) in reading, science, and writing. The new Mathematics Core Content and Performance Expectations for grades 3–8 will be assessed on the spring 2010 MSP and new high school Mathematics Core Content and Performance Expectations will be assessed in 2011.



Spring 2010 Testing Dates for MSP and HSPE

- 3 Math/ Reading
Paper/Pencil May 12–28
- 4 Math/Reading/Writing
Paper/Pencil May 12–28
- 5 Math/Reading/Science
Paper/Pencil May 12–28
- 6 Math/Reading
Paper/Pencil May 12–28
Online Testing May 3–June 4
- 7 Math/Reading/Writing
Paper/Pencil May 12–28
Online Testing May 3–June 4
- 8 Math/Reading/Science
Paper/Pencil May 12–28
Online Testing May 3–June 4
- 10 Reading
Paper/Pencil March 16 (one session)
Writing—March 17–18 (two sessions)
Math—April 13 (one session)
Science—April 15 (one session)
- 11 Reading
Paper/Pencil March 16 (one session)
Writing—March 17–18 (two sessions)
Math—April 13 (one session)
Science—April 15 (one session)
- 12 Reading
Paper/Pencil March 16 (one session)
Writing—March 17–18 (two sessions)
Math—April 13 (one session)
Science—April 15 (one session)

Washington schools listed as “needing improvement” double in numbers from 2008

At a news conference last month, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn called for more fairness and changes in the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability system. Washington schools on the federal “needs improvement” list nearly doubled from 618 to 1,073, despite state testing scores remaining virtually the same as in 2008.

There are up to 37 categories that each Washington school is evaluated on to determine whether or not it made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a measure of year-to-year student achievement on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in reading and mathematics. NCLB requires that states develop a baseline or starting point for students to achieve proficiency as measured by WASL mathematics and reading scores. Each year Washington must “raise the bar” in gradual scoring increments so that by 2013–2014, all (100%) students will achieve proficiency in each subject area. When the bar was raised in 2009, another 455 schools were added to the “needs improvement” list.

In spring 2009, more than 500,000 Washington students in grades 3–8 and 10 took the WASL. WASL scores in grades 3–8 and 10 mirrored 2008 results, increasing in seven subject areas, decreasing in seven, and remaining unchanged in six, resulting in 1,073 schools moving into “needs improvement” status.

“Our state testing scores are flat, yet the federal system shows an additional 500 schools are failing,” Superintendent Dorn said. “What is failing is No Child Left Behind. The law is completely unfair. While we know there is certainly room for improvement in our schools, it’s a statistical guarantee in this law that all of our schools will soon be in federal improvement status. That’s unrealistic.”

Although results were mixed in the seven grades tested, Dorn was particularly impressed with the significant gain the state had made in writing during the past 10 years. In 1999, just 41 percent of all 10th graders passed writing. This year, 86 percent of all 10th graders passed.

According to Dorn, some of the statewide results over the seven tested grades were encouraging as sixth-grade reading scores increased by 3.4 percent and eighth-grade science scores increased by 3.2 percent. At the same time, seventh-grade reading scores decreased by 3.5 percent and 10th-grade mathematics scores decreased by 4.1 percent.

For the class of 2010, 86.5 percent of incoming 12th graders (those who have remained in school and are on track to graduate) have passed the reading and writing exams. Nearly 60 percent of the class passed the WASL Mathematics. However, those students who did not pass the WASL Mathematics section can meet the graduation requirement by earning two credits of mathematics after 10th grade. The state does not track credits earned.



For complete Washington test results by school, school district, and grade level, visit <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?year=2008-09>