





TO: P-12 Education Committee
FROM: Ken Wagner 
SUBJECT: Instructional Technology and Computer-Based Testing
DATE: November 10, 2014
AUTHORIZATION(S): 
SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

Schools and districts across New York are increasingly using technology to enhance instruction in their classrooms. As the capacity for instructional technology grows in our classrooms, the Department must plan for a similar transition to computer-based testing for state assessment purposes. A transition to computer-based testing for state assessments would offer a number of advantages, including the ability to make test questions even more instructionally-relevant, more flexible administration options, better security, more embedded field test items and more timely return of test results. This discussion is intended as an opportunity to increase awareness around best practices in the use of instructional technology and computer-based testing.

Background Information

The Department issued guidance to districts beginning in 2012 about the gradual transition to computer-based testing in New York. The most recent memo, dated January 2013, strongly encouraged districts to continue to build their technology capacity with a focus on instructional needs.¹

Educational technology offers many instructional benefits, and devices purchased for use in the classroom are, in most cases, appropriate for the implementation of computer-based testing. If districts intend to purchase computer devices for instructional purposes, including tablets and desktop/laptop computers, the Department has encouraged them to ensure that these devices can also be used to support computer-based testing. Schools and districts should not purchase computer devices solely for state assessment purposes.

¹ Field Memos on the transition to computer-based testing:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/technology/devices/technology-purchases.pdf>

http://www.p12.nysed.gov/nonpub/documents/transition_strategy_to_computer_based_testing.pdf

New York State school districts vary in their experience and preparedness for computer-based testing. Many have used computer-based tests to administer a number of local assessments. In addition, other state and national assessments are administered on computer, including the Test Assessing Secondary Competence (TASC), New York State Teacher Certification Examinations (NYTCE), and the American College Test (ACT). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) will be administered via computer beginning with a pilot in 2015 and moving toward full implementation in 2017. However, districts and schools have not administered large-scale statewide assessments to students on computers in New York State.

To support opportunities for districts to pilot computer-based testing, New York participated in the PARCC field test in Spring 2014. For some of the participating 225 schools in 75 districts, this was the first opportunity to administer a test on computer. Schools volunteered to participate in the field test as an opportunity for students to experience computer-based tests and as an opportunity for schools to test their infrastructure and preparedness. Overall the field test was successful for participating districts, and the Department received positive comments from administrators, teachers, and students. Additional options for the field to pilot computer-based testing are being considered.

Panel Presentation

Panel members will share their experiences with instructional technology and computer-based testing following a Department summary of participation and feedback on the PARCC field test. The individuals on the panel represent BOCES, Regional Information Centers, districts, and schools that are in various stages of preparedness and participation in computer-based testing.

- **Dr. Donna DeSiato**, Superintendent, East Syracuse Minoa Central School District, Member, NYS Technology Policy and Practice Council
- **Theresa Gray**, Coordinator, Integrated Education Services, Erie 2 - Chautauqua Cattaraugus BOCES; Member, NY PARCC Education Leader Cadre
- **Glen Huot**, Director, Monroe Regional Information Center
- **Deborah Kavanaugh**, Principal, Pinewood Intermediate School, Mohonasen Central School District
- **Niket Mull**, Executive Director of Assessment, New York City Department of Education

Panel members will discuss:

1. The ways in which districts and schools currently use computers for instruction, with a focus on assessment;
2. Current levels of readiness for computer-based assessment;
3. The benefits and challenges of computer-based testing; and
4. Next steps necessary to prepare administrators, teachers, and students.

Next Steps

It is recommended that the Board of Regents direct staff to continue planning for a transition to computer-based testing for State assessments, with additional piloting in Spring 2015. In addition, Department staff will prepare a recommendation to the Board about whether or not to administer the PARCC assessment in the 2015-16 school year.