

FAQs on High School Testing

Since last year we have been discussing with you the new requirements for high school testing. Some are already in place and others are in the law to start this year and next. Unfortunately we have only been able to share with you what the law requires but no particulars about what tests or when these tests would be administered. The Public Education Department is required to take the mandates in all laws and convert these into rules and procedures. These rules and procedures give us the particulars. These were defined this week in a memo from the PED.

All 11th grade students must take a College Readiness or a Career Readiness test or produce a demonstration of competencies. This is a mandate from legislation passed in 2007 (HB460). This bill, sometimes referred to as the High School Redesign law, redefined the testing that must take place in high school including the high school exit exam. The law provided that this testing must go into effect for the 2009-10 school year.

Who takes what tests in high school this year?

- 9th - short-cycle assessments at least 3 times a year in reading/language arts and math.
- 10th - short cycle assessments at least 3 times a year in reading/language arts and math;
- 11th - one of three assessments in the fall, the SBA in the spring, and re-take any subtests of the high school competency exam that they have not passed as 10th graders
- 12th graders have no mandated assessments

Do we have to administer the High School Competency Exam (HSCE)?

Yes. All students who were 10th graders in 2008-09 or before are required to take and pass all six subtests of the HSCE. The HSCE will be re-administered in the fall and again in the spring for these current 11th and 12th graders.

What about students who are reclassified 10th graders? Do they take HSCE?

If that student took the HSCE once last year and did not pass all six subtests, then that student must take and pass the HSCE to exit high school with a diploma.

What tests to current 10th graders take to get their diploma?

Sitting 10th graders will have to take and pass the SBA as 11th graders next year to earn a high school diploma. As 11th graders they will take the ACT or Work Keys as well if the law stands.

What tests must 11th grade students take this fall?

All 11th graders must select ONE of the following tests:

- The ACT as their college readiness test
- The Work Keys as their career readiness test
- The Alternative Demonstration of Competencies (ADC) as a portfolio of demonstrations

What is the Alternative Demonstration of Competencies (ADC)?

The law provides for a student to choose the alternation demonstration but has not provided any parameters around what this is. The PED has not developed the rules or procedures around this ADC. We do not know when that work will be done.

When are the tests scheduled?

As of October 7 The ACT was scheduled for December 12, 2009 and February 6 2010.
The Work Keys was scheduled for two weeks in December 2009 beginning December 7th.

Yesterday, the Secretary of Public Education, Dr. Veronica Garcia, stated that she was cognizant of the burden that this testing, as it has now been defined, has put on the schools and districts. She is working with her legal advisors **to examine her options for testing.**

What are the Secretary's plans?

Dr. Garcia's preference is that in light of the current budget short-falls across the state, the new testing is delayed until a later year and the existing requirements remain as they are.
All 11th graders would take the SBA in the spring and in the fall and spring they would take only the HSCE subtests they have not already passed.
The current 10th graders would NOT take the HSCE but instead have to take and pass the SBA next year as their exit exam.
9th and 10th graders would continue with short cycle assessments as they are now.

Why can't she just decide this now and let us move on?

The new testing requirements are in legislation. To postpone the testing requirements for additional testing added by HB460 *may* take legislation. If Dr. Garcia's legal advisors conclude that the PED must move forward with the testing, then the legislation would be possible in the special session coming October 17th. This puts districts in a tight bind for planning and actually doing the tests if the legislation is NOT passed.

What happens if the legislation is NOT passed to postpone testing?

We assume that the PED will move forward with the plans in place now and we will test 11th graders in the fall with the ACT or Work Keys.

What Happens if Testing is NOT Postponed?

What testing is required if there is no postponement?

- 9th and 10th grade testing stays the same as it is now;
- 10th graders 2009-10 do NOT take the HSCE
- 11th graders take a college or career readiness test AND the SBA in the spring AND any HSCE subtests they need to graduate. Remember, only students who have to pass one or more content areas take the HSCE.
- 12th graders are not tested.

Do these tests count towards AYP?

No.

How will this college or career readiness testing be done if there is NO DELAY?

By October 30 all students must declare which assessment they intend to take: ACT, Work Keys or ADC. Using this information the district Testing Service Center will place the orders for the Work Keys. Students who decide to take the ACT will have to register for this test using the typical ACT on-line or paper registration process.

Who pays for the ACT?

The state will pay a portion of the testing and reporting. The remainder of the cost for the ACT is the district responsibility.

Students will be provided a voucher with a unique number. They will use that voucher when they register with ACT.

What if the student has already taken the ACT? Can it count?

No answer yet on this question

Do they get their money back?

No answer yet on this question

What about students who need accommodations for the ACT?

Right now we have no confirmation about what a student who needs accommodations must do. However, we are assuming that the standard process for securing accommodations will have to be followed for these students. The request for accommodations as well as the provision of the necessary documentation to ACT will need to be followed. This is a difficult and cumbersome process so it would be in students' best interests for their parents to move forward with this process as soon as we are sure we are moving forward with this testing.

What about ELL students who need accommodations?

We have no confirmation about these students and the possibility of accommodations other than the standard requests as well. So the same standard process of requesting accommodations will apply to these students until and unless we hear otherwise. If we do, we will alert you.

What Happens if Testing is NOT Postponed?

Should we advise our special education students to take the Work Keys or complete the ADC?

Do not advise any *group of students* to pursue one option over the other *based on a single characteristic*. However, it may be helpful if students were provided some guidelines about which assessment option is best for them, individually. For example,

- IEP committees may wish to provide parents and students with some guidelines specific to that student,
- Students who are pursuing CNM can use the ACT in lieu of the Acuplacer.
- Students who are not sure, may want to take the ACT as it keeps more options open for them (UNM, CNM, and workplace).
- Students already in career pathways that move towards a certification and job experience may find the Work Keys more valuable to them and their potential employers.
- ELL students may determine that the ACT is an option for them or that the Work Keys is more appropriate at this time.

You don't seem to be recommending the ADC. Why?

We are not prohibiting students from pursuing this option. However, we are not able to advise students or school staffs what is involved in the Alternative Demonstration of Competencies. There are no legislative guidelines nor any rules or procedures from PED. Further there is no clarity around how the ADC meets the “portfolio” that students can use if they do not pass the SBA as their exit test next year as 11th graders.

We are sure that the burden of ‘scoring’ the portfolio or the ADC will be that the school/district. We are not prepared to provide adequate guidance to you or your students around this option.

When does the student take the Work Keys?

The Work Keys is scheduled for 2 weeks in December 2009, starting December 7th,

Do the students take both tests?

Students take only ONE test either the ACT or the Work Keys

What if a student takes both tests?

There are no consequences for testing too much. The district would have to pay both fees for the student's testing. Given our budget short-falls please do not encourage students to take both tests. If it happens by accident then the costs will have to be covered.

Does the student have to share their ACT scores with universities?

Not that we are aware of. **We will confirm this answer**

When do we get the results back?

No answer yet on this question

What Happens if Testing is NOT Postponed?

What do parents and students receive in the way of a report.

No answer yet on this question.

Where do the students take these tests on these two Saturdays?

Right now the PED has stated that students are assigned to a testing center on a first come first served basis. We have objected to that assignment strategy. We have asked that all students be assigned to their enrolled high school as their testing center. We have no response from PED or ACT on this issue.

What if there are too many students to test in our high school under the ACT rules?

We have no answer for this question yet. We will ask that ALL students testing from one high school be assigned to that high school regardless of any standing ACT rules.

Who proctors the ACT?

There is little information on this and most of it has been verbal. The plan is that ACT (the company) will use the same strategy to secure proctors for the mandated ACT as they do for the voluntary ACT. As we understand it, the ACT pays a school coordinator to secure proctors who are then paid by ACT for their Saturday administration of the tests.

We have asked for confirmation of this process.

What do we do about students from other schools who have already signed up to test on the ACT at my school?

We assume that these students will be accommodated as you typically have done so in the past for the voluntary ACT. Then in addition to those students you, will have to accommodate the newly registered students who are currently enrolled at your school and are participating in the mandated testing.

What if I am not a testing center?

We have asked that all high schools in APS automatically be made a testing center. We have not had a response from PED or ACT on this request. If they will not accommodate this request each school that is not a testing site will have to follow the standard process to apply and become an ACT site.

What if my ACT coordinator cannot get enough proctors?

We will provide a district-wide call for proctors so that a person may proctor at a school in which they do not teach. The Testing Service Center will work with ACT coordinators to share proctors for these dates.

What Happens if Testing is NOT Postponed?

Will students have transportation?

The testing staff alerted the Transportation Department early this fall that there may be a need to provide all high school bus routes to and from school for two dates in the fall. That was as much as could be shared at the time. Once the decision to test has been finalized Testing Services staff (Christoph Brunder) will work with Transportation to ensure routes are run to and from school for both testing dates. Transportation may have to have abbreviated pick up spots to accommodate this Saturday testing schedule.

What about security on campus during testing?

The APS School Police were notified of the potential need for security. This notification was earlier this fall and no specifics were provided. As soon as we have a final decision we will let the School Police know. The individual officers assigned to your school will work directly with your staff about the particulars.

Will we provide a meal?

Right now we do not have the times for testing but assume that the times are the same as the regular ACT. Therefore the students will start after a breakfast hour and be gone before the lunch hour. However, if you believe that a snack is required and that there is time in the schedule to provide for the snack, Testing Services will work with Food Services. Again, testing staff notified Food Services of the possibility of this need but with no particulars.

If students select the Work Keys will it be administered on line?

No. The Work Keys for the New Mexico public schools mandated testing is NOT on line. The testing is paper pencil.

When and how is that test administered?

The Work Keys will be administered during the school day only to those students who do not participate in the Dec. or Feb. ACT. It will take approximately three hours to administer the test.

What if a student signs up for the ACT in February and does not show up?

No answer yet on this question.

Do we have to do a make-up ACT or the Work Keys?

No. If a student declares their intent to test in February on ACT and fails to show up there will NOT be any make up testing.

Please do not encourage students to do this as there will be some sort of accountability for making an effort to test all students. If high numbers of students “fail to show up” for the last testing date, it will be a public discussion issue.

What Happens if Testing is NOT Postponed?

Who is responsible for paying for these tests?

Testing Services staff alerted the superintendent and the chief financial officer that there were going to be new tests as well as increases in the costs of existing tests. However, no specifics could be provided at budget time because no bids were published by the PED. We only estimated. Winston and Dupuy prepared as best they could for this increase on top of the existing cuts and the upcoming short falls and in spite of little information from PED on actual costs. Our district will meet its financial obligations for all testing that we are required to administer.

Why is this being done at the last minute?

We have no answer to that question.

If I have more questions who do I contact?

You may send your questions to any of these contacts listed below.

Christoph Brunder at brunder_c@aps.edu or at 872-6830

Email rda@aps.edu. The mailbox is checked throughout the day and your email will be forwarded to Chris or to the right person if Chris is not the person to answer your question.

Thank you for being patient through this. We are aware of the incredible burden this testing would have been even with adequate notice but this situation of last minute preparations has increased that burden beyond what was necessary. We will work with you to minimize any stresses that we can.

Testing Services Staff will work with you to make this as smooth and bearable as possible if there is not a postponement of testing. They will work closely with the PED staff to make sure that all of these last minute details are worked out for next year if we have to continue these new tests.

Don't hesitate to call any of these staff to help you with your testing questions or concerns.

- Chris Brunder 872-6830 brunder_c@aps.edu

For materials call:

- Ann Lesley 848-8752 Lesley@aps.edu
- Mario Barriga 848-8751
- Andy Edel 848-8751
- Regina Sanchez 848-8751

Remember: Testing Irregularities...

Report any testing security or administration irregularities to Chris Brunder immediately. Do not conduct investigations at your school nor invite other non-school staff to investigate. Report them immediately to Chris. Thank you.