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MEMORANDUM

TO: Exceptional Student Education Directors

FROM: Bambi J. Lockman

DATE: December 7, 2007

SUBJECT: Florida Alternate Assessment

Contact Information:

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The purpose of this memo is to provide an update regarding the progress of the new Alternate Assessment. Over the last six weeks we have collected a great deal of information about this fall's field test administration. Input from teacher surveys, letters and e-mails from school districts and parents, as well as meetings with both the Assessment Technical Advisory Committee and the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee have all provided us with invaluable feedback. Additionally, we have had the opportunity to review the field test statistical data.

The two primary concerns expressed by our constituency were:

- The extraordinary amount of preparation time and materials required
- The length of the administration time for the assessment

We also received some excellent recommendations from teachers regarding the appropriate use of prompts and the need to repeat questions for this population of students.

Based upon all the information collected, we have determined that the following critical changes will be made to the assessment for the March administration:

- Auxilliary materials will be pre-printed and spiral bound in an 11X17 book. At each grade level, one book will include reading and math. At grades 5, 8, and 11 science will be a separate book. There may continue to be a few items that are open response, thus requiring test administrators to cut out response cards. Since writing involves primarily open response items, words and sentence strips will still need to be cut out for writing in grades 4, 8, and 10.
- Teacher gathered materials have been reduced to items found in every school.
- The number of items for each content area at each grade level will be reduced from 30 to 16.
- The teacher manual will be revised to include more information about general procedures.

Florida Alternate Assessment

BAMBI J. LOCKMAN
Chief

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

- The teacher manual will include a section on the use of prompts for the purposes of redirection, repeating items, and maintaining student focus.
- Braille and tactile graphics will be available for students who are blind.

Excellent feedback was also received from district assessment and alternate assessment coordinators regarding the actual processing of materials and the administration manual for managing the distribution of materials. The attached one-page summary, Spring 2008 Operational Test Administration Procedures, provides information about field test feedback and changes to be made for the Spring administration.

Given the changes being made, teachers will need both a new teacher administration manual and updated training. We have targeted **January 15, 2008**, for the following:

- Revised teacher administration manuals will be shipped to school districts.
- Copies of a training DVD directed to teachers as administrators of the assessment will be shipped to school districts and will be posted on the Bureau's Web site.

As we move forward, we will continue to seek feedback and recommendations from teachers, administrators, parents, and our advisory committees. We will be providing an online survey for teachers to give feedback on the operational assessment this spring. Advisory committee meetings are scheduled for this spring as well.

As we are making revisions to the administration process, we are also preparing information on the new assessment for submission to the U.S. Department of Education peer review. The assessment and its alignment to academic content standards will need to be approved through this peer review process. We anticipate that the results from this year's assessment will be included in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) calculations for the 2007-08 school year.

For your information, we have also attached key dates for this spring's operational test administration as well as the schedule for 2008-09. Thank you for your participation and your feedback in the field test. As we had anticipated, we learned a great deal in this process and believe the improvements made to the assessment will benefit both students and their teachers.

Attachments

cc: Commissioner Eric J. Smith
Chancellor Cheri Pierson Yecke
Pam Smith
Cornelia Orr
Kris Ellington
Jay Pfeiffer
Karen Denbroeder
Angela Nathaniel
District Superintendents
Assistant Superintendents for Curriculum and Instruction
Student Services Directors
Alternate Assessment Coordinators
District Assessment Coordinators

Florida Alternate Assessment Spring 2008 Operational Test Administration Procedures

Field Test Online District Coordinator Survey Feedback

- Procedural Manual - instructions need to provide greater detail for materials handling at the district- and school-level:
 - Instructions were unclear on how auxiliary materials should be dealt with at the school-level.
 - Instructions on what to do with security checklists and signed agreements were vague.
 - Instructions on what to do with blank answer sheets were not clear.
- Shipping – distribution and return of materials could be improved:
 - DHL did not always pick up materials when called and drivers were not helpful.
 - Boxes within a pallet did not contain district contact information. In one case, when the pallet was broken down for inside delivery, the boxes were taken to the wrong department and the appropriate contact could not be notified.
 - For some districts, it's easier to return boxes as pallets rather than having to place a label on every single box.
- Auxiliary Materials – while most respondents felt that cutting and collating materials took a very long time, there were other issues with these materials as well:
 - Auxiliary materials should not be considered secure test materials since teachers have access to them before the administration window anyway.
 - These materials should not be considered secure materials because there is no way of knowing if all cards are returned once they've been cut up.
 - Some districts suggested that it was a waste of time and money to return these materials and requested that they be allowed to destroy those internally.
 - Once auxiliary materials are cut up, they take up a lot more space in boxes, so some districts required more boxes, labels, etc. for returning materials.

Changes for the Operational Test

- Scannable Answer Sheets will be pre-printed with student demographic information.
- Materials will be bundled by school with boxes clearly labeled to help with distribution.
- Administration procedures will mirror the FCAT as closely as possible.
 - Labels and envelopes will be provided for each school to return materials to districts (i.e., TO BE SCORED, NOT TO BE SCORED, DISTRICT COORDINATOR ONLY).
 - We will try to match as much of the terminology as possible with that of the FCAT (e.g., TO BE SCORED/NOT TO BE SCORED instead of TO BE SCANNED/NON-SCANNABLE).
 - Detailed instructions and packing diagrams will be provided to help provide consistency across schools.
 - We will provide additional quality check forms, such as the Answer Sheet Count Form and Answer Sheet Return Summary used for the FCAT.
 - Districts will receive plenty of overages with their shipments.
- Districts will be given the option of palletizing NOT TO BE SCORED materials for pickup by a freight transport company such as AAA Cooper or Old Dominion.

Note: We will be contacting all districts in December to request the following information: main contact for shipping and receiving materials, shipping address for materials, and shipping address details (e.g., does your testing center have a loading dock? Is it capable of receiving and/or building pallets?).

Florida Alternate Assessment Updated Timeline

2007-2008	Timeframe	Activity
	February 25 – April 2, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2008 Operational Test Window
	Week of April 7, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Standard Setting
	May/June 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting
	Week of July 14, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validation Standard Setting
2008-2009	Timeframe	Activity
	April 2, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passage Bias Review
	Week of June 23, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content/Bias Review • Train-the Trainer Training
	September 8, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice Materials
	October 20-31, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 Science Field Test Window • Survey
	January 5- February 27, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009 Operational Test Window
	May/June 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Standard Setting