

Periodic Assessments: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

General Program Questions:

Have educators had an opportunity to provide input on the new assessment tools?

Educators have been extensively involved in informing the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Periodic Assessment Program, as well as evaluating the vendor proposals through an Advisory Committee. They will also be involved in reviewing and adapting the Instructionally Targeted Assessments to ensure they are aligned to school's curriculum scope and sequences before they are finalized. In the future, educators will be given the opportunity to create and share their own assessment questions or tasks for the item bank, in order to further customize assessments to best meet their students' needs.

Will evaluative decisions be made based on the results of these assessments?

Evaluative decisions will NOT be made based on assessment results. These assessments are solely tools for teaching and learning. There are no stakes attached to the results for schools, principals, teachers or students.

How many assessments are required by the Department of Education?

In grades 3-8, a minimum of five (5) assessments are required throughout the year in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. In grades 9-12 a minimum of four (4) assessments are required throughout the year in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Math; however, in year one (2007-2008) of the new Periodic Assessment program, three (3) assessments will be required for high school.

What are the possible assessment combinations a school may choose?

The DOE recommended assessments are 2 Predictive and 3 Instructionally Targeted Assessments (ITA). However, schools may choose a number of combinations in order to meet the 4-5 requirement. Some examples are:

- 2 Predictive, 3 ITA
- 3 ITA, 2 built from item bank
- 3 ITA, 2 Computer Adaptive
- 2 Predictive, 3 developed by school (DYO)
- 5 developed by school (DYO)

How does a school demonstrate they are meeting the 5 assessment requirement?

Schools demonstrate they are meeting the assessment requirements through the Quality Review, which looks at the way schools makes meaningful use of the data from each of the assessment administrations, as well as other valuable data collected throughout the school year.

Will schools have to pay for these assessments?

Schools will not have to pay for the DOE-provided assessments or professional development. Based on school suggestions, we are working to make additional professional development available for purchase at the school's discretion. If schools opt-out of the DOE-provided assessments and apply to design their own assessments (DYO), they will be eligible to receive an allocation from a pool of funding to supplement their investments in this work.

Which assessment best matches our curriculum?

Each school will have the opportunity to choose the ITA strand that best matches their scope and sequence. Multiple options will be developed for both math and ELA, each customized in collaboration with educators for some of the most commonly-used curricula in New York City. Schools also have the ability to tailor the assessments at the school and classroom levels.

What if the assessment options do not align with what is taught in my school?

The Instructionally Targeted Assessments are being built with input from NYC educators to align to the scope and sequences of the most commonly used school curricula and approaches. Schools will be able to choose from a menu of ELA and Math assessments, each aligned to different curriculum and pacing calendars. Within these options, schools can still further customize the assessments to align with their particular pacing calendars. Schools also have the option of building an assessment from the Customized Item Bank to assess a particular skill or set of skills at any time during the year.

When does my school have to decide which assessments it will administer for the 07-08 school year?

Schools must decide which assessment options they will administer for the coming school year by July 6, 2007. Surveys will be distributed to capture this information. Those schools that choose the ITA will have more time to determine which scope and sequence is appropriate for their school and will make that choice in August/September.

Assessment Administration

How will the assessments be administered?

Assessments will be administered either on-line or paper-pencil. Schools choose whether printing and scanning will be done by the vendor or at the school. For schools opting to administer paper-pencil with the vendor printing and scanning, the assessments will be delivered to the schools with pre-slugged answer sheets packaged

according to class rosters indicated on ATS (for 3rd-8th graders) or HSST (for high school).

Is there an assessment administration window for each assessment?

The predictive assessments and ITAs each will have an assessment window. Customized item-bank assessments and computer adaptive assessments can be administered at any time (although it is recommended that computer adaptive assessments be administered at least nine weeks apart)

How long will each assessment take?

Each assessment can be administered within a 45-minute class period. The predictive assessment is also available in an extended version that better mirrors the length and variety of questions on the state tests. If a school opts to give the extended version of the predictive assessment, short response and extended response items can be graded by the school and students' scores entered online.

Assessment Results and Reporting:

How long will it take to receive assessment scores and reports?

Results will be available immediately for assessments given online. For paper/pencil assessments, schools may choose to have the vendor score them or to score them at the school site. If the vendor scores them, the results will be available within five school days from the time the answer sheets are picked up at the school by a courier. Alternatively, schools may purchase a compatible scanner and score the answer sheets themselves, and receive reports through the online system immediately.

What kinds of information and suggestions will the reports give?

The reports for all assessments give results at a school level, grade level, class level and individual student level. The reports for predictive assessments, ITAs and customized item-bank assessments detail patterns of strengths and weaknesses students exhibit within learning objectives. Item analysis and distractor analysis for particular questions is available. The reports for the computer adaptive assessment give information on student's overall level as well as their proficiency on strands within a subject. Predictive assessments predict students' performance on the upcoming state tests. Educators will also be able to assign instructional resources based on student assessment data.

Will the student assessment data be recorded in the new Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS)?

The assessment data will be accessible through ARIS to facilitate ability to view assessment data alongside other important information, such as attendance, state test scores, and knowledge management supports contributed by educators.

How will students, families, teachers and other school staff access the results of the assessments?

Pedagogical staff and students will receive log-ins and passwords to access reports online. It is recommended that schools share the results of the assessments with families in forums such as parent/teacher conferences. Parents may also use the student log-in information to access assessment results. Beginning in September 2008, parents will also have access directly through ARIS.

How do I use the new assessment tools to monitor a student's progress over the school year?

Assessment data will be available longitudinally so that educators can review student's progress, not only for the current year, but for all previous years that data is available. The predictive assessments, when administered two times during the year, are also designed to measure growth within an academic year.

Can I create unique instructional groupings within the assessment system?

The assessment system allows educators to place students in instructional groups to work on specific standards or skills, view reports for targeted groups of students, and even assign instructional exercises to specific students in an instructional group.

Can I export data from the assessment reports?

Yes, the report data is exportable into an Excel file.

Design Your Own (DYO) Assessments

Can schools opt out of DOE's assessment tools and design their own?

Those schools who find the assessment offerings do not meet their students' needs may apply to create their own assessments through the DYO process. Schools must submit an application for this process and meet the DYO criteria. More information can be found at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/ChildrenFirst/Accountability/Support/PeriodicAssessments.htm>. Schools can also combine the DOE provided assessments with the DYO option. For example, they can administer two predictive assessments and three DYO assessments.

If my school is currently administering its own assessments, will I have to replace these with the DOE's options?

Schools that are satisfied with their current assessment program will have the option to continue this program through applying for the Design Your Own option. Schools must submit an application for this process and meet the DY0 criteria. More information can be found at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/ChildrenFirst/Accountability/Support/PeriodicAssessments.htm>

Special Education

How do the new assessments serve Special Education students?

The Computer Adaptive Assessment is designed specifically for students two or more years above or below grade level, including Special Education students who participate in the General Education curriculum and the State Assessments. This assessment provides an indication of a student's current instructional level in reading, language, and math and provides objective, detailed, standards-based information to inform instruction. The online assessment automatically adjusts to students' ability level depending on answers to previous questions. Schools may wish to administer the Computer Adaptive first, and then tailor the Instructionally Targeted Assessments (ITA) based on that student's instructional level or continue to use the Computer Adaptive to measure growth throughout the year. These assessments will also be particularly helpful in developing and reviewing student IEPs, as they will provide an indication of the student's progress and where educational supports are needed.

Should students with testing modifications on their IEPs receive those accommodations?

It is recommended that students receive all IEP accommodations for the assessments, but schools must make the best judgment for each child.

Professional Development and Instructional Support

Will there be professional development for teachers and administrators?

Numerous professional development opportunities will be available, including systems training and utilizing assessment data to inform instruction. Every effort will be made to maximize impact by bringing professional development directly to the schools.

Will schools be able to share best practices in utilizing data to inform instruction?

Schools will have the opportunity to share best practices through numerous venues, including the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS), the online assessment system provided by the vendor, and other school support mechanisms.

What types of instructional resources will be available for educators for each assessment option?

The Predictive, Instructionally Targeted and Computer Adaptive Assessments all have instructional resources available to educators. Based on a student's strengths and weaknesses the data reports will recommend specific web-based or paper-based exercises a teacher can assign to the student or groups of students.