

## **Changes to District Assessment Handbook**

Included district Non-Discrimination Statement	p. 3
Revised testing dates	p. 24-27
ASVAB Date is TBD	p. 24
Removed Iowa Youth Survey for 2013-14 (conducted every 3 years)	p. 24
Changed NAEP date - have not been contacted	p. 26

**Adel DeSoto Minburn CSD**  
**District Assessment Handbook**  
**2013-14**

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### **Nondiscrimination Statement**

Students, parents, employees and others doing business with or performing services for the Adel DeSoto Minburn Community School District are hereby notified that this school district does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age( for employment), marital status (for programs), or socioeconomic status (for programs) in admission or access to, or treatment in, its programs and activities or hiring and employment practices. Any person having inquiries concerning the school district's compliance with the regulations implementing Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 504 or Iowa Code 280.3 is directed to contact: Nancy Gee, Business Manager, 801 Nile Kinnick Drive South, Adel, IA. 50003, 515-993-4283, who has been designated by the school district to coordinate the school district's efforts to comply with the regulations implementing Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, the ADA, 504 and Iowa Code 280.3.

Any person having inquiries concerning the school district's compliance with the regulations implementing Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 504 or Iowa Code 280.3 is directed to contact:

Nancy Gee

801 Nile Kinnick Drive South

Adel, Iowa 50003

Telephone: 515-993-4283

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## Introduction

The ADM District Assessment Handbook contains information regarding our district assessment policy, and is in a question/answer format. Much of the information and wording is taken from guidance provided by the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Testing Program. Specific details about assessment procedures and timelines are provided in later sections of this handbook.

### *Why a district assessment policy?*

The primary intent of written policy on test use is to help ensure the integrity of the information obtained from the use of educational assessments. If scores become tainted because of inappropriate practices in either preparing students or in administering tests, the meaning of the scores will be distorted and their value for their original purpose will be diminished or lost. Some educators may not be aware of the consequences of their actions, so policy helps to inform and to create awareness of the potential negative impact that certain practices might produce.

### *What tests are included in this policy?*

The policies and procedures outlined in this handbook cover district-wide student achievement assessments. District-wide assessments include Iowa Assessment; district benchmark assessments in reading, written language, math, science and social studies; and CoGATS.

### *Who are the assessment coordinators for the district?*

The district assessment coordinator is Greg Dufoe, superintendent. All district assessments (except for PK-5 reading) will be coordinated through his office. The elementary reading strategist, Carole Erickson at Adel Elementary, will coordinate all PK-5 reading district assessments. Building administrators will serve as building coordinators for assessments such as the Iowa Assessment. See district assessment calendar in this handbook for specific assessment assignments. Questions regarding assessments should be directed to the appropriate assessment coordinator.



## Developing District Benchmark Assessments

### *What is the purpose of District Benchmark Assessments?*

ADM District Benchmark Assessments have two purposes. The first is to comply with a state requirement to have multiple assessments to measure student achievement. Our first assessment is the Iowa Assessment, which is a norm-referenced test. Our District Benchmark Assessments are criterion-referenced tests, meaning they directly measure what has been taught in our local curriculum.

The second purpose of these assessments is to support student learning. Since these tests measure what has been taught in the ADM curriculum, we can use results from the benchmark tests to reteach any content/skills that were not mastered by students and to monitor the quality of our curriculum.

### *What courses/grade levels have District Benchmark Assessments?*

At this time, the following grades/courses have District Benchmark Assessments:

- PK-8 Mathematics
- PK-5 Reading
- 6-10 Science
- 6-12 Social Studies

### *What should be included on District Benchmark Assessments?*

When designing a District Benchmark Assessment for your course, **only those content or skills designated as mastery in your scope and sequence should have test items on the assessment.** Other content and skills might be assessed on chapter or unit tests and quizzes, but **should not** appear on the benchmark assessment.

### *What are format requirements for District Benchmark Assessments?*

According to state guidelines for multiple assessments, our District Benchmark Assessments should

- be criterion-referenced
- contain questions in formats other than selected response (i.e., short answer, essay, project or product)
- follow best practice for test item development and number of items per content/skill being assessed
- be a valid assessment

We continue to work as content area committees to review our District Benchmark Assessments to assure they meet these guidelines.

In addition, it is strongly recommended that District Benchmark Assessments are not designed to be an end-of-the-year assessment that asks students to recall an entire school year's worth of knowledge and skills. Instead, it is recommended that the District Benchmark Assessment be given in sections, twice a year at minimum. This design will give teachers, students and parents a better view of what students know and are able to do. Additionally, it gives teachers the opportunity to reteach knowledge and skills not at mastery during the school year, not in the last two weeks of school.

Revisions to district benchmark assessments need to be approved by the district assessment coordinator.



## Acquiring and Storing District Assessment Materials

*How will testing materials be stored and acquired throughout the school year (other than testing times)?*

The number of ADM staff members authorized to obtain, store and disseminate district assessment materials will be limited so that aspects of storage and accessibility can be monitored. Test booklets will be provided to individual staff members only when they have a professional need to use the materials. In addition, tests should not be given to or shown to parents who request to see the tests, except under direct supervision of a district administrator. Test booklets are not to be loaned to individuals outside of district staff. Copies of test booklets will be stored in the central office. Requests to borrow a test booklet should be made to Greg Dufoe. They will be provided on a checkout basis.

*How will testing materials be stored and acquired prior to and during testing?*

Iowa Assessment: When materials arrive from Iowa Testing Programs for annual testing, they will be stored in a secured area in each building with access restricted. See your building administrator for specific building procedures for acquiring and storing testing materials during Iowa Assessment testing times. Iowa Assessment testing materials will be stored before and after testing in the central office.

CoGATS: When materials arrive from Riverside Publishing for annual testing, they will be stored in a secured area as determined by the GATE teacher. See your building administrator and/or GATE teacher for specific procedures for acquiring and storing testing materials during CoGAT testing times.

District Benchmark Assessments: *To the extent possible*, master copies of all district benchmark assessments (except PK-5 reading) will be stored electronically (if available) at the central office. Prior to the testing period, the central office will send out copies for classroom/student use. *Teachers need to send numbers needed to Greg Dufoe about 2 weeks in advance of testing.* Teachers are not to make their own copies of district benchmark assessments without permission from Greg Dufoe. Any changes made to district benchmark assessments need to be done with permission from the central office.

*How will testing materials and test results that remain in the district be stored after testing is completed?*

Testing materials and test results will be stored securely, with limited access, in the central office. These tests might be retained for late testing, professional development or use with score reports. When possible, test results and testing materials will be in electronic format and stored electronically.



## Test Preparation and Practice Activities

Test preparation incorporates a broad array of activities that should be intended to prepare students to exhibit their true achievement when they take an assessment. Some activities may be legitimate in helping students understand the assessment process so that the process itself does not interfere with obtaining a true measure of students' achievement. These kinds of activities should represent a good use of instructional time. Some other activities may be completely inappropriate, especially those that are designed to boost test scores without a corresponding lasting increase in actual student achievement. Such activities are regarded as unethical because they distort test scores, rendering them useless for describing true achievement or improvement. The distortions form "falsified" records of student achievement, which can lead to erroneous decisions about students and buildings.

One legitimate preparation practice involves ensuring that students are familiar with common test taking strategies that involve topics such as the use of time, the role of guessing, and responding to unfamiliar test item formats (this kind of preparation should be directed toward a *type* of test rather than toward a *specific* test). As students move through the grades and gain experience with taking a certain type of test, like the *Iowa Tests*, however, the need for such activities should greatly diminish. Preparation also could involve informing students of the purposes of testing and how scores will be used so that students are sufficiently motivated to perform well.

*What specific activities are appropriate to use with students in preparation for testing?*

We can't anticipate all of the activities that might be created for test preparation purposes. Teachers should consult their building administrator before using any test preparation materials rather than assume certain practices are acceptable. This procedure is to ensure that unethical practices are not implemented inadvertently and to ensure that students who need assistance will have the right help available in a timely manner. All materials used for test preparation should be retained by the person who used them.

*What specific activities are prohibited from use with students in preparation for testing?*

Providing students with actual test questions or specific test content prior to testing is unethical and a violation of the ADM district assessment policy. In addition, questions from previous forms of standardized tests (such as forms K and L of the *Iowa Tests*) should not be incorporated in test preparation.

"Teaching the test" and "teaching to the test" are different practices. For example, teaching a strategy for solving math story problems in general would be an appropriate way to teach *to the* test, and simultaneously, teach to ADM's standards and benchmarks. But practicing solving math story problems that appear on a district-wide assessment (or nearly identical problems) would be teaching *the* test.

The appropriateness of any proposed practice should meet *either* of the two following standards:

- It will promote the learning and retention of important knowledge and content skills that students are expected to learn
- It will decrease the chance that students will score lower on the test than they should due to inadequate test-taking skills or limited familiarity with the item formats used on the test.

Activities that do not meet one or the other of these criteria are more likely to be unethical, to promote only temporary learning, or to waste instructional time. When ineffective or unnecessary test preparation activities are used, valuable instructional time is lost.

*How far in advance of testing should test preparation activities be used, or for how long prior to the start of testing should each activity be used?*

Ideally, test preparation should be an integral part of the regular instructional program rather



than an add-on activity. In that way, instructional activities that support test preparation likely would occur throughout the year rather than in a concentrated block of time just prior to the test administration. Activities that occur just prior to the testing tend to have a short-term effect, whether the temporary impact was intended or not. Also, intense practice or attention to testing during the weeks immediately before testing tends to put undue pressure on some students, causing them to be less prepared psychologically for performing at their best.

In terms of preparing for the ADM end-of-the-year benchmark assessments, teachers should review both the district standards and benchmarks for the course and the end-of-the-year assessment at the beginning of each school year. These documents should guide instructional sequencing, pacing and time on skills and concepts so those mastery items are sufficiently taught and reviewed throughout the school year and prior to the assessment.

*Is it ever appropriate to use the actual test forms (those used in the current year or subsequent year) for test preparation?*

No, providing students with test items or test answers in advance of the test is highly unethical. Such activity puts the focus on getting particular test questions right rather than on measuring student achievement in the subject area represented by the questions. The questions on a district-wide assessment should/do represent only a sample from all the questions that could be asked when measuring achievement in a subject area, say science or math. It is (should be) highly rare that a benchmark assessment or standardized assessment contains a given test item that is so important that its content should be learned by all students or taught to all students directly. Those items should appear on formative classroom assignments and assessments such as quizzes.

When the exact test is the focus of instruction, the test scores lose their meaning, and they portray an achievement result that is dishonest.

*Is it ever appropriate to use previous forms of the assessment (e.g., Forms K and L of the Iowa Tests) for preparation purposes?*

No, the use of previous forms of the accountability tests for practice or preparation purposes also is unethical. Different forms of the same test are designed to be similar in content and skill level so that scores from them can be used relatively interchangeably to estimate growth and improvement. Although the content on a previous form is not exactly the same as that of the current form under use, the similarity is great. Preparation with the previous test form narrows the focus of student learning and restricts the ability of the user to generalize broadly in interpreting the students' scores.

*Is it ever appropriate to develop practice tests or review activities that are similar in content or format to the actual test forms currently in use?*

No, when practice materials that essentially "clone" the operational test that is in use are developed, the situation is somewhat akin to using a previous form of the test. Limiting the focus of instruction to such materials, even for a brief but intense time period just before testing, creates limits on the generalizability of the test scores. Furthermore, such "practice tests" move the focus of instruction to isolated bits of content instead of broader skills that should be the target of student learning.

*Is it appropriate to provide students with a review of content covered by the test as a form of test preparation?*

It depends. A review of content is a common instructional strategy used prior to many forms of classroom assessment. But when the review is narrow and limited to the exact skills that will



appear on the district-wide assessment, the practice is more questionable. Some forms of review are ethical, but the more closely the focus is on the sub skills to be assessed and the more likely the goal is to enhance short-term learning, the more inappropriate the activity would be. Content review geared toward enhancing retention of skills learned previously, however, is a form of sound instructional practice.

The distinction between appropriate and inappropriate subject matter preparation is not always clear. Activities directed toward specific content known to be on the test and conducted shortly before testing time are probably inappropriate. When the purpose is to drill for short-term retention, as cramming typically is, the practice is inappropriate. When the purpose is an additional opportunity to review and learn material for which instruction was previously provided, and the focus is on skills that may or may not be covered directly by the upcoming test, the practice is more appropriate. Here are two relevant questions to ask in trying to make the distinction:

- Would the same content-oriented test preparation activities be used if the current district-wide assessment tool were replaced by another?
- Would these same content-oriented test preparation activities be used as schedule even if the date for administering the assessment were to be moved to two months later?

If the test preparation is designed primarily to fit the district-wide assessment tool, or if it needs to be given just before the assessment is scheduled to be given, the activities are probably too narrow in content focus and directed too much at short-term effects. They would be considered inappropriate on either basis.

*Should all students be provided an opportunity for test preparation in advance of the actual test each year?*

Not necessarily. Test preparation activities probably should be limited to assisting those who need help rather than for use en masse. Younger students may need more help than older ones, lower achieving students may need more than higher achieving ones, and some students in special programs may need more than those in regular programs. Just as general instruction is often individualized, so test preparation (which is a form of instruction) should be individualized. It should be based on need. In addition, the potential negative consequences of test preparation should be considered. Outcomes such as elevated test anxiety or overconfidence about the easiness of the test tasks can result from poorly designed test preparation emphases.

*Isn't test preparation for accountability testing (district-wide testing) essential so that students will score just as high as they can?*

Not really. Obtaining the highest possible test score is not necessarily the primary goal. The notion of test preparation is often associated with students preparing to take a college admissions test such as the ACT or SAT. On such tests, students want to maximize their score to optimize their chance of being admitted or being eligible for scholarship aid. Test taking strategies that promote the highest possible score are used in conjunction with practice tests to foster greater confidence in anticipation of taking the actual test. However, the purpose of using an achievement test, like the *Iowa Tests*, is to find out just how well a student has achieved. Trying to get the highest possible score, at seemingly any cost, is not consistent with that purpose. There are no particular consequences for the student (no admission decision, for example); the test score should represent what the student knows. Scores that are artificially high are likely to cause some students to get less teacher attention than is needed and to keep the students from various instructional programs that might help them improve. Thus, scores that misrepresent a student's performance are more likely to be harmful than helpful to that student. Test preparation or test-taking practices that promote artificially high scores could



harm the students who need extra instructional attention. The use of inappropriate preparation practices may keep a school off the "Watch List" or from being designated as "in need of assistance," but it will not serve the interests of low achieving students whose scores disguise their actual level of achievement. Nor will it serve the needs of the schools or district to understand the true achievement of all students so that instructional programs can be modified based on student needs.

**As one last reminder regarding Review for ADM Benchmark Assessments:**

While it is necessary to review with students the mastery concepts and skills from the year/course (the ones that should be "sampled" on our benchmark assessments if they are "mastery"), ***in any way using the actual, specific content or questions from the test (in a different format, with one word changed, in a different order, in a game format) is unethical.*** We want to know what the kids know and are able to do as a result of our teaching, not our test preparation ("cramming for the test"). Further, this review should be an ongoing part of the yearlong instruction, as a part of the district's mastery learning philosophy.



## Test Administration

Although we do not have explicit, standardized guidelines for administering district benchmark assessments, the *Directions for Administration* manuals for the *Iowa Tests* provide explicit guidance about preparing for a test administration. Much of the information contained in this section is related to the *Iowa Tests*, although some is generalizable to other district-wide assessments.

The *Directions for Administration* manuals include directions for administering each test along with ***instructions that should be read verbatim to provide a standard testing situation for all students, no matter who gives the test, where it is given, or when it is given.*** All tests should be administered exactly as the publisher's manual specifies. The use of accommodations or modifications is also outlined in the *Directions* manual, but each teacher should work with the building administrator, IEP team and/or ESL coordinator regarding the use of accommodations, especially by those students who do not have an IEP or 504 plan.

*What kind of assistance or advice can be provided to students during the test administration?*

Assistance during test administration **is not permitted** (unless accommodations specified in the IEP or 504 plan call for a certain type of assistance). Students should never be told during the test administration which answers are correct or whether they have answered an item incorrectly. The test administrator (classroom teacher) should not provide hints, word meanings, pronunciations, or rephrased questions.

Students should not engage in any practice that could artificially impact the score of any student. Prohibited behaviors include communication with one another in any form during the testing sessions, copying from others, and using electronic devices other than approved calculators or assistive technology. This needs to be communicated to all students.

*What are the district's expectations regarding the use of time limits provided in the Directions for Administration?*

All time limits given in the *Directions for Administration* should be adhered to strictly (except in the case of an accommodation for an individual student that call for extended time). Time limits should not be modified at the discretion of the test administrator (classroom teacher). Furthermore, the *Directions* for the *Iowa Tests* do **not** provide for warnings about time remaining or a need to guess at final answers. Thus, these activities are inappropriate.

*May a student, when finished with a section or subtest, go back and work problems from another test section?*

No, students cannot go back. An exception is the IOWA ASSESSMENT reading comprehension test which has two parts. On this test students may go back to part one when finished with part two.

*What are acceptable and unacceptable accommodations or modifications that might be considered for use with students who have an IEP or 504 plan?*

Accommodations to be used during testing are developed at the time the IEP or 504 plan is written or revised. Examples of modifications that should **not** be made include reading aloud



the reading comprehension or vocabulary subtest, using a dictionary on the vocabulary subtest, and using a calculator on the math computation subtest.

*What procedures should be used in deciding whether a student who has no IEP or 504 plan should be given any accommodations?*

Some students who have not been identified for special education services, and thus have no IEP or 504 plan, may have skill levels that require an accommodation. This decision is not to be made by the test administrator (classroom teacher). Decisions on accommodations are made by the building administrator in conjunction with the IEP team.

*What accommodations are permitted or not permitted with English Language Learners?*

The rationale for using accommodations with an English Language Learner (ELL) is the same as the one that applies to a student with a disability. For an ELL, competence in the English language is regarded as a form of disability because the student's low skill level in English interferes with measuring achievement in areas such as science, reading, math problem solving. To reduce the impact of the language on measuring the student's achievement, changes in the administration might be made. Any accommodation that could change the nature of what the test is measuring should not be used. Thus, a read-aloud could be appropriate in math but not for reading comprehension. The use of a translation dictionary would be appropriate in science if meanings of scientific words were not given in the dictionary. All accommodations will be determined by the building administration and Greg Dufoe.

*If a student has just enrolled at ADM, do they take the test?*

In most cases. All students should take the test unless the new student has already been tested on the Iowa Assessment in their previous district this school year. Exceptions may be made for some district benchmark assessments. For example, on district benchmark assessments, students are tested on their *instructional level* (this is different than the grade level testing required on the Iowa Assessment.) Benchmark assessments can be modified for those students who enrolled in your class after the first day of school. Consult with your building administrator or Greg Dufoe in making this decision and note this modification on your score report spreadsheet.

*Do all teachers at the same grade level need to give the district benchmark assessment the same day/same week?*

As much as possible, students at the same grade level should be assessed on district-wide assessments on the same day/week. This standardization of testing gives us results that are more comparable (student-student, class-class).

Additionally, on district-wide benchmark assessments collaborate with grade level colleagues to maximize consistency in scoring (e.g., labeling answers, assigning partial points).

*On ADM Benchmark Assessments, can we break up the testing, or do we need to give the whole assessment in one setting?*

**It is recommended that the ADM Benchmark Assessments be given, at a minimum, as two semester tests, not one end of the year test.** During an administration period, you can break up the testing on our ADM benchmark assessments as best meet students' needs, so that their scores reflect the students' knowledge and skills and not their ability to work within a time period. Plans for breaking up the testing time needs to be consistent at a grade level to ensure standardization and comparability of scores. Any questions



regarding this should be directed to the district assessment coordinator.

*Should environmental print (such as word walls, multiplication charts, etc.) be removed from classroom walls and other classroom areas prior to testing if they have information on them that might be construed as helpful on the test?*

Yes, it would be a good idea to cover or remove items like that, especially something you are certain would give assistance that other students and other classrooms have not had available during testing. This is generally an issue in grades K-2, but it can happen with any grade (e.g., multiplication chart). *(taken from email response from Dave Frisbie at Iowa Testing Program)*

Further, any aids like multiplication charts taped to student desks should be covered or removed prior to district-wide tests such as the Iowa Assessment or benchmark assessments.

*Should students have food or drink available during testing?*

No. Students should not have access to food or drink at their desk during testing. This keeps answer sheets clean and prevents misreads by scoring machines. Food or drink may be available to students between testing sessions, as approved by the building administrator.



## After Testing is Completed

*What kinds of alterations to a student's answer document are permissible by individuals other than the student once testing is over?*

In preparing answer documents for scoring, it may be appropriate for a staff member to erase smudges or stray marks on students' documents. Light marks on documents can be darkened. But no changes should ever be made to student responses to test items except by a student during testing.

*Who has access to testing materials during the year?*

Staff members who have a professional need to use the testing materials during the year will be allowed to check out materials through the district superintendent's office. Staff members will need to provide the purpose for the use of the materials and will be given a checkout time frame appropriate to the purpose. When in the possession of test materials, it is inappropriate to disclose the contents of test materials to students, parents, or others who do not have a professional need for such information. Thus, sharing correct answers to questions or reviewing test items with students after testing is over are both inappropriate.

*What test materials may be photocopied and with whose prior approval?*

No test pages of standardized tests such as the *Iowa Tests* may be photocopied for any reason by any district personnel. (These are copyrighted materials for which Iowa Testing Programs does not provide permission for copying). Other testing materials, such as answer sheets and pages from manuals may be copied based on prior permission from Iowa Testing Programs and authorization from the district office. Copies of district benchmark assessments will be made by the superintendent's office, or by permission of Greg Dufoe, for use with students or for professional development purposes.

*What do we do with student scores from ADM district benchmark assessments?*

Each teacher will receive from Greg Dufoe or Carole Erickson an Excel spreadsheet pre-populated with student names and already set up to enter student scores. Once all students have been assessed, **enter the student scores on their 1<sup>st</sup> attempt on the test**. Then send (electronically) the completed spreadsheet back to Greg Dufoe or Carole Erickson, and the building administrator.

If students have not reached mastery on the benchmark assessment, reteaching of mastery skills is recommended (and required in PK-8 math). Teachers can then retest students on these mastery skills **on an alternate form of the assessment** (again, this is required in PK-8 math). These retest scores are not reported to the public, but are recorded by the classroom teacher and used for decisions such as summer school, tutoring, class placement (at the secondary level), etc.

*If I give an end-of-the-year benchmark assessment at the beginning of May, how should I best use the instructional time left in the month?*

After testing is complete, use the remaining instructional time to reteach skills not mastered and to preview introductory level benchmarks that are necessary for the next grade level or course. If the benchmarks and end-of-the-year benchmark assessment were used at the beginning of the year to plan for the pacing and sequencing of instruction, introductory level benchmarks should already be planned to be taught at this time.



## Use of Score Reports and Data Files

*Who will receive, store, and distribute test results in their paper and electronic forms?*

All paper and electronic forms of test results/data will come first to the district superintendent's office (with the exception of PK-5 district reading benchmark assessment data). The superintendent will then distribute test results to the building administrators, and store electronic and paper data forms in the superintendent's office.

*To whom may test results be distributed and for what purposes?*

Certainly students and their legal guardians have a right to see their individual scores, but those scores should be treated as confidential, consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Thus the scores of individuals may not be shared, on paper or electronic form, with others without written permission. The scores of grade groups (e.g., averages or other summary data) are subject to the provisions of the open records law, but their release or distribution will be handled by the district superintendent or by building administration. Student data will be available to ADM staff members through HEART (AEA online database). As with test data or scores in paper form, electronic database information should be treated as confidential, consistent with FERPA.

*On benchmark assessments, can you reteach to those students that don't reach the mastery level?*

Yes. It is recommended that you do reteach those mastery skills. In math at grades PK-8, reteaching and retesting is required on benchmark assessments. In other grade levels and content areas, it is recommended practice. See ADM policy statement on reteaching/ retesting on the next page.

*How do I accurately interpret and explain student scores on district-wide assessments?*

During district "data days," you will be give guidance on how to interpret score reports. In addition, help pages (written by the Heartland AEA assessment team) regarding percent, percentile, and grade equivalent scores are included in this section of the handbook.



## **ADM Policy on ReTeaching/ReTesting District Benchmark Assessments**

In keeping with the mastery learning philosophy, ADM supports the use of tests to diagnose areas for further teaching so that all students can master the objectives of the course. This teaching/testing/reteaching/retesting cycle occurs throughout the year with all units of study. With this process in place, teachers should be able to help students master content and skills prior to any end of year/course district assessment that might be required.

When a district benchmark assessment is given and skills/content are still not mastered (score of 80% accuracy or higher), ADM supports additional reteaching followed by further assessment (**on an alternative form of the test**) to verify students' mastery of that content/those skills. That "retest" data can be used to determine whether a student needs tutoring, summer school, what course placement might be appropriate, etc.

In terms of reporting student achievement on these district benchmark assessments, please send to the Superintendent's office **only the original scores**. You will receive an electronic Excel form to record this information. A retest score in a teacher's grade book indicates that reteaching has happened for individual students in their targeted need areas. Further, **retesting should happen with an alternative form of the assessment**.

In reporting our district data to the public, the original score on the end of the year/course district assessment will be used. Retest scores will be used internally to make decisions about individual students and will not be reported.

Mastery is only required of PK-8 math. It is recommended for all other courses/grade levels.



## Help Pages for Interpreting Assessment Data

### You say “percent” I say “percentile...” Let’s call the whole thing off.

So you’ve got those two words, percent and percentile, that sound sort of alike, and sort of talk about the same thing, but aren’t. How are you supposed to know which is which?

Percent refers to the proportion of the whole thing, as in “I got 25% right on the test,” or “90% of the kids passed the test.” Essentially, it answers the question “how much?” or “what part of 100?” A percent is absolute, referring to the exact part of the whole.

Percentile is short for percentile rank. In the world of assessment, a percentile describes how a score fits in to the distribution or spread of scores in the comparison group. So, if a student scored at the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile, he scored better than 40 percent of those in the comparison group. It answers the question “how well compared to...?” A percentile is a score relative to the comparison group, and is totally dependent on how everyone in that group performs.

How do they relate to each other? A student may know six letters of the upper case alphabet, which is about 23 percent of the letters. If her score was the highest of all those in the comparison group, she would score at the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile relative to that group. If, however, the typical or middle performance on the alphabet test for the group was six letters (23 percent correct), her score would be at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile relative to that group. On the other hand, if everyone else scored higher than 23 percent correct (more than six letters), her score would be at the 1<sup>st</sup> percentile.

(taken from written information provided by the AEA11 assessment team)

### Using Grade Equivalent Scores

Statements like “Bill has a 5.4 reading level” or “Susan performed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade 3<sup>rd</sup> month level on the Woodcock-Johnson” are heard often in meetings with educators and parents. While such statements seem simple enough for anyone to understand there is a great potential for misunderstanding. Usually, such statements are unaccompanied by any further explanation, such as what the student actually did to earn a particular grade equivalent score, or to whom the student’s performance was compared. Stating that Bill reads at the 5<sup>th</sup> grade level appears to mean just that: Bill reads like a 5<sup>th</sup> grader reads. While using a grade equivalent seems like a simple way to describe a student’s skills, understanding and explaining what a grade equivalent *really* means is much more difficult.

*What are the common mistakes that people make using Grade Equivalents (GE)?*

- People often think that if a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student obtains a GE score of 8.2 on a test then they are ready to do the 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. This is **not** what GE means.
- People often think that you can determine how much a student learned by adding/subtracting GE scores. Example: Susie had a GE in math of 3.4 last year and this year she obtained a GE score of 5.2, so her math learning grew 1.8 years in a year. This is **not** how to use a GE score.
- People often think that if 2 3<sup>rd</sup> graders (Tommy and Billy) both get a GE of 3.2 then they have the same skills or can do the tasks equally well. Again, this is **not** what grade equivalent means.

*Where do grade equivalents (GE) come from?*

A grade equivalent for an individual student’s raw score is computed by matching his/her raw score with students in the norm group (others who took the **same test**) whose average for their grade level



is equivalent to the raw score.

- Students in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 6<sup>th</sup> month group are in a norm group taking level 7 or the “LMNOP Test”
- The average raw score for this group of students is 42
- Later, Jamie takes the very same test (level 7 of the “LMNOP Test”) and has a raw score of 42
- Jamie’s GE score on this (now norm referenced) test is 4.6

*But in reality...*

In reality, not every test has a norm group make up of enough students at each year and month in school to have an exact average for each level. Moreover, many raw scores fall between the averages at the various “grade/month” levels. Therefore, many grade level scores are extrapolated from the scores of the norm group.

*More problems...*

But wait, it gets even more complicated than that. As most any educator or parent knows, learning doesn’t take place on a straight-line trajectory. To the extent that a test measures changes in learning, the progression of scores also is not a straight line.

Based on the norm group from the scenario above, five students in a classroom, at the same grade might have “raw” test scores and GE scores that look like this:

Student	“Raw” Test Score	Grade Equivalent
Jamie	24	1.8
Sasha	25	2.0
Tali	34	5.4
Falon	30	3.6
Kris	28	3.0

So, Sasha’s grade equivalent score is two months above Jamie’s and has a raw score that is 1 point higher, while Tali’s grade equivalent score is three years and six months above Jamies, but has a raw score that is 10 points higher. The difference between what Sasha got correct and what Jamie got correct is only one test item, while Tali got ten more ten more items correct. The number of questions a person needs to get correct to move up the grade equivalent scale are not the same across the scale, the GE scores are not an “equal interval” score. Moreover, it doesn’t matter which actual items the students got right or wrong, only how many right or wrong. It’s easy to see why grade equivalent scores tell us very little about what skills a student knows and what they can do.

*And remember the test materials...*

Many tests, such as the Iowa Assessments, have multiple levels of tests, with a certain level recommended to be given at a specific grade. To at least some extent, the test level meant for the grade level better reflects the curriculum for that grade. However, GE scores, based on averages from the norm group, essentially had many students taking “out-of-level” tests that were not commensurate with the curricula being taught at their grades. For example, students in the third month of the sixth grade taking a third grade test would have an average score that would generate a GE score of 6.3. These sixth-graders from the norm group might have gotten virtually every item correct on the “third-grade level” test. Conversely, if later, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student took the test and had a raw score the “matched” the average score of the norm-group students in the third month of sixth grade, this does NOT mean that student could do well with sixth grade material.

*False sense of Criterion-Referenced utility*

As discussed above, grade equivalent scores do not describe what a student actually did to earn a particular score. Thus, by definition, GE scores cannot be used to make criterion-referenced decisions.



For example, on a math test, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader may earn a GE of 5.0 by getting all of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade items correct. A 7<sup>th</sup> grader may earn a GE score of 5.0, but by getting a small percentage of cumulative items up to those expected by 7<sup>th</sup> grade students correct. These students' GE scores appear to be equivalent; their performances however, are not. Nothing can be said about these students' instructional needs based on GE scores alone. It is very likely that neither of these students should be placed instructionally in 5<sup>th</sup> grade material. Unfortunately, the statement that the 7<sup>th</sup> grader "is functioning at the 5<sup>th</sup> grade level" appears to suggest just that.

### *The Myth of the "Average" Child*

In a seductive way, GE scores encourage misunderstandings on the part of test interpreters. For example, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student who earned a score a few raw-score points below the average score for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders on the test would earn a GE that is below 3.0, suggesting that this student is performing "below grade level." Nothing could be farther from the truth. "Average" performance is best described as a range, not as a score. Using a GE of 3.0 as a standard of performance is to suggest that all students beginning their third grade year should perform at exactly the 3.0 level. Thus, marginally low GE scores give the impression that students are performing behind expectations when in fact they may be in the average range. Similar problems arise for marginally high GE scores.

### *So what do GE scores tell us?*

Grade equivalent scores are on a continuum. A GE score of 5.4 does reflect that a student got more items correct than a student with a GE score of 5.3 (we just don't know how many or what items). Also, a student with a GE score considerably higher than his/her grade level reflects that a student is doing very well on the test material considered typical for his/her grade level. A student who has a GE score considerably below his/her grade level is not doing so well. Composite grade equivalent scores can give a general picture of how a group of students is performing on the test compared to the norm group. This can be helpful in determining the immediacy of a need or the general strength of a skill area. Grade equivalent scores can provide one piece of information that can support a decision but would be difficult to use by themselves when making a high stakes decision.

(taken from written information provided by the AEA11 assessment team)



## Checklist for Test Examiners

### District-wide Test Preparations and Procedures

#### Two Weeks Before Testing

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Create a schedule for testing. Collaborate with other grade level or department staff. (Example: all third graders will take the reading comprehension at 9:00 a.m.). Submit schedule to principal).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Talk with students about the purpose and importance of the tests, the procedures being used, the ways results will be shared, the impact of results on the school, and how results impact individual students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Establish and communicate rewards and consequences, if appropriate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Arrange for IEP and ELL accommodations, if appropriate.

#### One Day Before Testing

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Check materials:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a. One test booklet and answer sheet per student (with barcode labels, where appropriate).
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. One copy of test administration directions per test examiner (if available).
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. One pencil and eraser per student. (Have extra pencils on hand.)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d. One piece of scratch paper for each student. (Have extra paper on hand.)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ e. If needed – one calculator per student.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Make the necessary physical arrangements (seating, lighting, heating, ventilation, control of visual or noise distractions) in the room. If needed, cover or remove visual aids.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Obtain a sign that reads *"Testing. Please do not disturb us!"* for use during testing sessions.

#### During Testing

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Follow the directions exactly as they appear in the directions for test administration.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Monitor students during the test to make sure that they are working on the correct test pages and that they are marking responses in the proper place and manner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Make notes about irregularities or problems that arise, either for the entire class or for an individual student.



- \_\_\_\_\_4. Store materials in a secure, locked area between test sessions. Count test booklets after each testing session.

After Testing

- \_\_\_\_\_1. Verify that the number of answer sheets being returned is equal to the enrollment count for each class.
- \_\_\_\_\_2. Verify that all tests have been taken by each student.
- \_\_\_\_\_3. Erase stray marks on answer sheets.
- \_\_\_\_\_4. Return all answer sheets and other testing materials to the building principal/test coordinator.
- \_\_\_\_\_5. Report any irregularities to building principal/test coordinator.



## Checklist for Building Principals/Test Coordinators

### Fall of School Year

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Collaborate with the central office on the ordering of test materials.

### Two to Four Weeks Before Testing

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. As materials arrive, store in a secure place.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Read the directions for test administration.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Arrange for staff to review test administration procedures. Consult district test coordinator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Work with teachers in planning for IEP, ELL and 504 accommodations. Establish responsible parties and procedures for make-up testing for IEP, ELL and 504 students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Collaborate with test examiners to establish a timeline and work out details. Submit schedule(s) to the district test coordinator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Count out materials. Contact district test coordinator concerning discrepancies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. If needed – make sure that computers are ready.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. If needed – place bar code labels on test materials.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Distribute directions for test administration and student answer sheets.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Visit all classrooms to reinforce with students the test's purpose, importance, rewards and consequences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Communicate with parents about the testing schedule and what they can do to support their child during testing (sleep, good breakfast, etc.)

### During Testing

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Distribute student test booklets to teachers on the first day of testing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Ensure that test materials are secured between test sessions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Monitor testing and report any irregularities to district test coordinator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Generate class lists for all students enrolled on the first day of testing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Check that appropriate accommodations are provided for students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Make sure that no interruptions

### After Testing

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Verify and complete information on answer sheets. All demographic



information (i.e., gender, FAY, IEP, ELL, SES, migrant, 504) and ID numbers for the Iowa Assessment needs to be accurate.

- \_\_\_\_\_2. Collect all materials from test examiners. Count to make sure that your numbers agree with the number of materials turned in.
- \_\_\_\_\_3. Work with building administrator to schedule make-up tests for students, if needed.
- \_\_\_\_\_4. Make sure that bubbles are dark and stray marks are erased on answer sheets.
- \_\_\_\_\_5. Alphabetize answer sheets and test booklets, if appropriate.
- \_\_\_\_\_6. Return to district coordinator the following:
  - \_\_\_\_\_a. Class lists generated on first day of testing
  - \_\_\_\_\_b. Unused prelabeled answer sheets with reason for not tested written on sticky note.
  - \_\_\_\_\_c. All other materials
- \_\_\_\_\_7. Work with district test coordinator on which reports to order.

#### After Test Results Arrive

- \_\_\_\_\_1. Look at test results for overall trends and underperforming students.
- \_\_\_\_\_2. Distribute classroom reports to teachers. Discuss results with teachers.
- \_\_\_\_\_3. Review use of HEART with staff.
- \_\_\_\_\_4. Place labels in cumulative folders.
- \_\_\_\_\_5. Distribute results to parents.



**ADM District  
Assessment Calendar  
2013-14**

Month	Date/Week	Test	Grade Levels	Comments
August	15-29	<b>Math:</b> District Benchmark Pre-Assessment		Scored by Classroom Teacher. Data turned in electronically to Debbie Stiles (Central Office) and building administrators by Monday, August 29 Used for classroom decisions
August/ September	August 20 - September 4	<b>Reading:</b> Concepts About Print Letter/Sound ID  Dictation Task	K   1	See Reading Assessment Schedule from Carole Erickson
September	TBD	<b>ASVAB</b>	11	The ASVAB provides students with career information for various civilian and military occupations and is an indicator for success in college, vocational school, or a military career.
September – June	Multiple Dates Hosted at ADM in April, 2013	<b>ACT</b>	11-12	Entrance test for most Midwestern colleges and universities Given at various sites throughout the area Results given to individual student and the school. District composite reported to public
September /October	September 30 - October 4	<b>COGATS</b>	3	Administered by Classroom Teacher Obtain test materials from GATE teacher. Data turned into building office/GATE teacher. Make up tests administered by GATE teacher or representative. Used for GATE program placement.
October	7-14	<b>Written Language:</b> District Pre-Assessment	PK-5	Scored by Classroom Teacher Data turned in to building administrator Used for classroom decisions
October	7-14	<b>Reading:</b> Concepts about Print Phonemic Awareness Letter/Sound ID  Letter/Sound ID Benchmark Book  Dolch words (1-3) Dictation Task Benchmark Book  Dolch words (1-3) Benchmark Book GATES McGinitie	PK    K   1   2	See Reading Assessment Schedule from Carole Erickson



		Benchmark Book	3-5	
October	16	<b>PSAT</b>	9-11	The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) is a program cosponsored by the College Board. It's a standardized test that provides firsthand practice for the SAT®. It also gives you a chance to enter the National Merit Scholarship Program and gain access to college and career planning tools.
November	6	<b>PLAN</b>	10	PLAN is pre-ACT test and a predictor of success on the ACT. PLAN also provides information on both career preparation and improving academic achievement.
December	10-20	<b>Social Studies:</b> District Assessment	6-12	Semester one benchmark of curriculum 1 <sup>st</sup> semester final for high school Social Studies classes Scored by Classroom Teacher Accommodations by Special Ed Team, ESL coordinator, and district assessment coordinator 100% participation rate required Re-teach and Retest recommended if score below 80% Report score on first attempt Data turned in electronically to Greg Dufoe (Central Office) and building administrators due by January 3 <sup>rd</sup> Used for determining mastery of ADM curriculum
December	10-20	<b>Science:</b> District Assessment	6-10	Semester one benchmark of curriculum Scored by Classroom Teacher Accommodations by Special Ed Team, ESL coordinator, and district assessment coordinator 100% participation rate required Re-teach and Retest recommended if score below 80% Report score on first attempt Data turned in electronically to Greg Dufoe (Central Office) and building administrators due by January 3 <sup>rd</sup> Used for determining mastery of ADM curriculum and public reporting
December	10-20	<b>Math:</b> District Assessment	3-8	Semester one benchmark of curriculum Scored by Classroom Teacher Accommodations by Special Ed Team, ESL coordinator, and district assessment coordinator 100% participation rate required Re-teach and Retest recommended if score below 80% Report score on first attempt Data turned in electronically to Greg Dufoe (Central Office) and building administrators due by January 3 <sup>rd</sup> Used for determining mastery of ADM curriculum and public reporting
January	2-16	<b>Reading:</b> Letter/Sound ID  <b>Dictation Task</b> <b>GATES</b>	K  1	See Reading Assessment Schedule from Carole Erickson



		<b>McGinitie</b>		
January	21-24	<b>Iowa Assessment</b>	9-11	Public Report of Achievement Results for: Reading, Math & Science @ grade 11 Administered by Classroom Teacher at grade level Accommodations by Special Ed Team, ESL coordinator, and district assessment coordinator Make up Tests coordinated by building administrator <i>100% Participation Rate required</i>
February	Possible	<b>NAEP</b>	Grades TBD by NAEP if selected.	Reading, Math and Science National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) tests representative samples of students throughout the US. This provides a "Common Yardstick" to measure academic progress nationally. Individual and school results are not made available.
February	24-28	<b>COGATS</b>	5	Administered by Classroom Teacher Obtain test materials from GATE teacher. Data turned into building office/GATE teacher. Make up tests administered by GATE teacher or representative. Used for GATE program placement.
March	5	<b>COGATS</b>	8	(See Above)
March/ April	March 31 - April 4	<b>Iowa Assessment</b>	3-8	Public Report of Achievement Results for: Reading, Math & Science @ grade 11 Administered by Classroom Teacher at grade level Accommodations by Special Ed Team, ESL coordinator, and district assessment coordinator Make up Tests coordinated by building administrator <i>100% Participation Rate required</i>
April/May	April 28 - May 9	<b>Reading:</b> Benchmark Book Testing	3-5	Scored by classroom teacher. Data turned into building administrator. Used to determine mastery of ADM curriculum.
April/May	April 28 - May 9	<b>Written Language:</b> District Post-Assessment	PK-5	Scored by classroom teacher. Data turned into building administrator. Used to determine mastery of ADM curriculum.
April/May	April 28 - May 9	<b>Reading:</b> Concepts about Print Phonemic Awareness Letter/Sound ID  Concepts about Print Letter/Sound ID Benchmark Book  Dictation Task Dolch Words (1-9) Benchmark Book Gates McGinitie  Dolch Words (1-9) Benchmark Book Gates McGinitie	PK  K  1  2	



May	Various Dates	<b>Social Studies:</b> District Assessment	6-12	Semester two benchmark of curriculum Second semester final for high school Social Studies classes Scored by Classroom Teacher Accommodations by Special Ed Team, ESL coordinator, and district assessment coordinator 100% participation rate required Re-teach and Retest recommended if score below 80% Report score on first attempt Data turned in electronically to Greg Dufoe (Central Office) and building administrators due by the last day for teachers. Used for determining mastery of ADM curriculum
May	Various Dates	<b>Science:</b> District Assessment	6-10	Semester two benchmark of curriculum Scored by Classroom Teacher Accommodations by Special Ed Team, ESL coordinator, and district assessment coordinator 100% participation rate required Re-teach and Retest recommended if score below 80% Report score on first attempt Data turned in electronically to Greg Dufoe (Central Office) and building administrators due by the last day of school Used for determining mastery of ADM curriculum and public reporting
May	Various Dates	<b>Math:</b> District Assessment	6-12	Semester two benchmark of curriculum Scored by Classroom Teacher Accommodations by Special Ed Team, ESL coordinator, and district assessment coordinator 100% participation rate required Re-teach and Retest recommended if score below 80% Report score on first attempt Data turned in electronically to Greg Dufoe (Central Office) and building administrators due by the last day of school. Used for determining mastery of ADM curriculum and public reporting
May	5-16	<b>Advanced Placement Tests</b>	10-12	Tests for students taking ADM Advance Placement courses in Psychology, Calculus A/B, English Literature Composition, US History, Music Theory, US Government and Politics, English Language and Literature, Statistics, and World History. Students may also choose to take a test without enrollment in a specific course as preparation. Tests are scored on a scale of 1 - 5 with a score of 3 or higher required to qualify for college credit. Students receive a 1.000 grade point bonus in the course for taking the test.



**Adel DeSoto Minburn CSD  
2013-14 District Assessment Handbook  
Signature Page**

I acknowledge that I have reviewed the District Assessment Handbook.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_