

# FAQ on Paper and Pencil TNReady Test

## Updated Feb. 16, 2016

### **Contents:**

- **UPDATED:** General Questions
- Transitioning to the paper test
- Administration of the paper test
- Technology questions
- Measurement Incorporated contract
- Accommodations, Alternate Assessment, and ACCESS for ELLs

### **UPDATED: General Questions**

#### ***1. Why do students need to complete both writing prompts in the same day?***

Because both writing prompts are contained in the same test booklet, students must complete both prompts in the same day to preserve test security.

In grades 3-5, each writing prompt requires 75 minutes of administration time, a reduction from the 90-minute prompts in grades 6-11. We are sensitive to the amount of extended time that is appropriate for younger students to spend on an individual task, so schools are encouraged to take as many breaks as necessary. So, proctors could choose to have students take a break every 15 - 20 minutes to complete a 75-minute prompt (we have updated our accommodations guidance to clarify that districts are able to schedule a break *within* the subtest for all students without an IEP or 504 for every individual student). Moreover, schools can choose to break-up the subtests with another activity, such as completing a prompt before and after lunch or taking a recess in between prompts.

The two 75-minute writing prompts for elementary grades are similar to the requirement for ELA in historical TCAP testing, where elementary students had to complete two parts in one day, for a 70-minute and 66-minute session, or a total of 136 minutes. Moreover, there were two writing prompts required in 2014 for all grades and for grades 6-11 in 2015, which were administered in one day. We have been communicating since last spring that any paper of administration of TNReady would require the completion of a single subject in one day. The administration time requirement for writing this year is not materially different from what has been expected over the last several years of TCAP.

**2. *Because the test will now be given on paper, what will the math answer sheet look like?***

TNReady on paper will *still* include various types of questions. In order to capture more than just multiple-choice answers, the student answer sheet in math will resemble a worksheet with designated space to write out equations and draw graphs. You can view an example of item types as depicted on a student answer sheet [here](#).

**3. *Can teacher continue to use MICA and MIST to help students practice?***

MICA is still available to teachers; however, the practice tests will no longer be available in MIST. Instead, teachers and testing coordinators may download a paper version of the practice test from EdTools, if they choose to do so.

**4. *Why do districts lose scheduling flexibility with the paper test?***

Ultimately, we must maintain the single day administration for all paper testing due to test security issues. Both writing prompts (and all subtests for the same content area) are contained in the same test booklet with a single answer document. The administration of a single subject paper test over multiple days would allow for educators and students to review the second subtest in advance. Such an allowance would not meet the requirements of the USED assessment peer review process or our Technical Advisory Committee review. So, as we began communicating last spring, the flexibility to administer any subject over two days was always limited to the online format, which will not be available this year. Online administration allows for more robust test security, so that scheduling can be more flexible. However, paper/pencil testing enables full access to all test items which means scheduling must be designed to help minimize the risk of a breach in security.

## Transitioning to the paper test

### **5. Why did the department make the decision to transition to the paper and pencil test?**

Over the past few months, the department and districts worked together to strengthen our technology infrastructure and prep systems and devices across the state, and we were prepared for everything we could control. But on Monday, Feb. 8, a *new* issue we had not experienced before caused a network outage at the test vendor's site that interrupted testing for some students. This was unexpected and disappointing. Ultimately, this operational and network failure combined with the additional issues we had been mending almost daily over the past months caused us to lose confidence in our test vendor's ability to provide students with an online platform that could perform reliably and consistently during testing.

We decided we could not risk having students and educators spend additional time on a platform that showed inconsistent performance, so we paused testing on the morning of Feb. 8 and asked districts to go back to regular classroom activities. Later that day, in order to protect our students' instructional time and better ensure they have a positive test experience, we decided to move all students to a paper-and-pencil version of TNReady for both Part I and Part II for the rest of this school year.

### **6. Why did the testing platform fail during the first hour of the Part I testing window on Monday, Feb. 8?**

The third-party vendor that provides the network for Measurement Incorporated became saturated on Monday morning, preventing district connections from reaching the MIST platform. The failure was a vendor issue and not caused by technology issues at the district or school level. Server capacity, volume of users at the time of failure, and local infrastructure did *not* contribute to this event.

### **7. What did students who attempted to take the test on Feb. 8 experience?**

A number of different things happened when the network went down. Some students couldn't access the test, while others were on it but an error message was displayed. However, we do know that nearly 20,000 Part I subtests were successfully completed on the morning of Feb. 8.

### **8. How many students were impacted by the failure of the online system?**

Nearly 20,000 Part I subtests were successfully completed on Feb. 8. We are working with Measurement Incorporated to ensure those students will not have to retake those sections on paper, and we will reach out directly to school districts that have students who are affected.

Approximately 28,000 subtests were started but were not completed. Unfortunately, if a student was not able to complete their Part I test, they *will* need to retake Part I via the paper and pencil version.

### **9. How many TNReady tests have been successfully completed online? Will those scores count?**

Nearly 20,000 Part I tests were successfully completed on Feb. 8. We are working with Measurement Incorporated to ensure that students will not have to retake those sections on paper, and we will reach out directly to school districts that have students who are affected.

In addition, there were 171,000 TNReady and U.S. history tests completed online in 99 districts during last fall. All of these tests are still valid. The online and paper versions of the test were created simultaneously and with the same common/linking items to ensure scoring comparability.

***10. Will we revert back to the old paper version of TCAP in math and English language arts?***

TNReady is still the new test students will take this spring. This test is designed to assess true student understanding and problem-solving abilities, not just basic memorization skills. Regardless of the medium of assessment, this new and improved TNReady will provide schools, teachers, and parents with valuable information about our students' college and career readiness.

***11. How does the transition to paper and pencil affect social studies?***

Because the social studies test in grades 3-11 was originally scheduled to be given on the MIST platform, in light of recent events, the social studies test will also be given via paper and pencil.

## Administration of the paper test

### **12. How much will it cost to print the paper TNReady tests?**

Our contract with Measurement Incorporated provides that if the state moves to paper and pencil because of a *system error*, the vendor will provide paper tests at no additional cost to the state.

### **13. Do districts still have a flexible testing window to administer the paper test? When will they begin testing again?**

The testing window will begin no earlier than Feb. 22. Measurement Incorporated is currently working to schedule the printing and shipping of the paper test. We plan to share the revised testing window by Thursday, Feb. 11. Because TNReady will now be administered via paper and pencil, districts will be required to follow a more structured scheduling to ensure test security. As in previous years, districts will have to schedule *one* subject to be taken in *one* day across the entire district. Districts will no longer be able to make school-by-school scheduling decisions.

### **14. Is the paper version of TNReady an exact copy of what will be given online?**

In order to ensure test security, the paper version *cannot* be an exact copy of the online assessment. There are multiple forms and versions of both the online and paper forms. Each grade and content area will have multiple paper versions across Part I and Part II. Questions on all versions of the test have gone through the same item review process, and all test forms have the same common/linking items to ensure scoring comparability.

### **15. What will the item types look like on the paper-pencil TNReady test?**

The paper version of TNReady is fully aligned to our current state standards and includes items that go beyond multiple choice, like multiple-select and extended-response questions. All forms of TNReady – paper or online – have been through the same item review process and require students to demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills

### **16. Is there an advantage to taking the paper test instead of the online test?**

Through the psychometric process, the department has created paper-based test forms that are comparable to the online forms. All test forms cover the same standards, and items included on the forms have been through the same review process for standards alignment, bias and sensitivity, and accessibility. There is no inherent advantage or disadvantage if a student has already completed TNReady online.

### **17. Will testing times be any different for the paper and pencil test v. the online test?**

No, the amount of time students spend actually taking each assessment will remain the same. You can view these testing times on our website site [here](#).

### **18. How will accommodations, calculators, etc. be handled for the paper test?**

We will be issuing more guidance later this week.

**19. Will you adjust accountability for this year?**

Last spring Gov. Haslam and the General Assembly worked together to lower the effect of TNReady on teacher evaluation scores. As of the 2015-16 school year, TNReady will count for only 10 percent of a teacher's evaluation. Legislation passed last spring also provides districts with complete flexibility on how they utilize evaluation in any personnel decisions. Unless a district chooses to do so, TNReady growth scores will not be used for high-stakes decisions around personnel. You can find additional information about accountability during the transition to TNReady in this FAQ [online](#).

## Technology questions

### **20. Have the problems experienced on Monday, Feb. 8 been reported by districts before? Why were these bugs not addressed earlier?**

The problems reported on Feb. 8 were largely procedural and operational. The **new nature** of the issue Monday morning highlighted the uncertainty around the stability of Measurement Inc.'s testing platform, MIST.

It's important to note that throughout the 2015-16 school year, the department has continuously worked with Measurement Incorporated to strengthen the online testing platform. As a result of district feedback and through our efforts to collaborate, we have mitigated and eliminated many *technical* issues. The online platform has undergone many capacity tests, yielding actionable information to drive improvements. Despite the many improvements the department has helped to make to the system in recent months and based on the events of Feb. 8, we are not confident in the system's ability to perform *consistently*.

### **21. Why can't Part I and Part II be given in the spring at the same time once the issues are corrected?**

There are a number of reasons we have a Part I and Part II for TNReady. One main factor is that we need to provide enough time to hand-score the written responses from Part I, which is why it was scheduled during the window of time when we have traditionally done our writing exam in the past.

We also, though, want to be conscious of students' stamina, especially given the increased rigor of TNReady. Providing them with two separate moments in the school year in which they sit down to show what they know may help them perform their best. For these reasons, we are moving forward with separate Part I and Part II windows.

### **22. Why can't Part II be given online once the issues are resolved?**

First, we think it is critically important to provide our educators, students, and parents with clear direction on the approach we are taking this year, especially after this change. For the next few months, TNReady will be most reliable via the paper test, so we want to pause the online transition until we can ensure that it is equally consistent and reliable. We do not want to subject our educators and students to any further unnecessary uncertainty.

Second, after the events on Feb. 8, the department lost faith in the ability of Measurement Incorporated to consistently provide access to an online testing platform free of errors or distractions. Without additional time for capacity testing, we do not want to put our students, teachers, and districts in another situation where testing has to be halted. We know the time and energy that goes into preparing for an assessment – particularly by the students and their families – and we are not confident at this point that we can provide an online testing platform this year that will be absolutely free of interruption.

We want to have a larger conversation about this online testing transition to make sure we do it right. We take seriously the trust and responsibility our educators, students, and parents have placed in us to provide a reliable online test, and we do not want our educators and students to spend any further unnecessary time troubleshooting issues with the online platform.

We want to fully implement online assessment when we are sure the platform will work consistently.

***23. Are you still moving forward with computer-based tests?***

Tennessee is committed to moving toward a computer-based assessment in the long-term for all the reasons we've been articulating over the last several years. Technology is part of the real world for which we need to prepare our students. We believe that the numerous steps the state, our districts, and our schools have taken over this past year to get ready will both support this transition and, most importantly, our students' education. We have always said students shouldn't learn how to use a computer just to take a test. These adjustments will strengthen our schools' ability to use technology, and ultimately help our students be prepared for the real world.

## **Measurement Incorporated Contract Questions**

### ***24. What process led to the department to select Measurement, Inc. as a vendor?***

State law required the department to issue a request for proposals (RFP) and, through competitive bidding, contract with one or more entities to provide assessments in English language arts and math that are aligned to state standards and fully implemented during the 2015-16 school year. Pursuant to the law, the RFP was prepared in consultation with the Comptroller and in compliance with state procurement requirements.

The Central Procurement Office for the state of Tennessee (CPO) issued the RFP for the new math and English language arts assessment. CPO managed the RFP process with a focus on fairness and transparency and included educators and school district leaders from across Tennessee as subject matter experts in the process. Based on the company earning the highest technical score and proposing the lowest cost, CPO awarded Measurement Incorporated the contract. As required in the law, the contract was reviewed by the Legislative Fiscal Review Committee.

### **25. What services are covered under the contract?**

This contract with Measurement Incorporated requires the provision of comprehensive testing services for all public schools, state special schools, approved private schools, and home schools beginning in 2015-16. Testing services include the development, implementation, and maintenance of assessments in math and English language arts required under both state and federal law.

Measurement Incorporated is required to design and create high quality test items and test forms and all related support documents (including manuals, guides, reports, etc.) for online and paper administrations of the assessment. Items provided under the contract must include both selected and constructed response, and must assess student performance of the Tennessee Academic Standards. In addition to the development of the test, Measurement Incorporated is required to conduct internal item bias, reliability, validity, and other technical studies as necessary to support the assessments and provide study results to the department.

Implementation of the assessments includes the administration via an online assessment platform with a paper administration available if needed, the operation of a dedicated call center, scoring, and final reporting after the tests are given each year of the contract.

### **26. How much has the department paid Measurement Incorporated to date for contract services?**

The effective date on the contract between the department and Measurement Incorporated was Nov. 15, 2014, and work under the contract to design and create the test commenced in 2015. Payments to Measurement Incorporated for fiscal year 2015 totaled \$1,609,037.18 for the development of content and test questions. The department is only obligated to pay for services that Measurement Incorporated actually provides, so the amount paid to Measurement Incorporated for fiscal year 2015 was for work that had been completed. No payments have been made to Measurement Incorporated for fiscal year 2016.

**27. What impact does the failure of the online testing platform requiring a move to a paper test administration have on payments to Measurement Incorporated?**

The maximum liability listed on the five-year contract only represents available funds for payment to Measurement Incorporated and does *not* guarantee payment of any such funds under the contract unless the department requests work and Measurement Incorporated performs said work. The contract states that compensation shall be contingent upon the satisfactory completion of units, milestones, or increments of service listed in the contract. The department is only obligated to pay for services that MI actually provides.

The contract's payment methodology contains a payment "per student tested" for online assessment and a "payment per test" for a paper test administration. The paper test administration also requires additional charges for printing and shipping paper documents. In response to Measurement Incorporated's failure to provide the online testing platform requiring a last minute move to a paper test administration, the department has cited Section A.10.f.1.x of the contract which requires Measurement Incorporated to provide paper based testing at no additional cost to the department if errors in the online testing system arise calling for it.

**28. Will the department recoup any payments made to Measurement Incorporated based on their failure to provide an online testing platform during the first administration of TNReady?**

As stated above in the answer to question 4, the department is only obligated to pay for services that Measurement Incorporated actually provides. The contract with Measurement Incorporated also contains a *breach and liquidated damages* provision. The contract's definition of breach includes a failure to perform in accordance with any term or provision of the contract; or a partial performance of any term or provision of the contract. Section E.18 of the contract provides that in the event of a breach of the contract, the department may assess liquidated damages. The department is reviewing this provision of the contract in light of districts' inability to utilize the online testing platform in the first 20-day testing window of the 15-2016 administration of TNReady and, pursuant to the contract, will notify Measurement Incorporated of any amounts that will be assessed as liquidated damages.

**29. Does Measurement Incorporated's inability to provide the online platform during the first administration of TNReady mean that school districts, parents, and students should not have confidence in TNReady as a test?**

No. Under the terms of the contract, Measurement Incorporated agreed to provide a computer-based online testing platform and ensure its functionality. This move to online testing represented an important step forward for Tennessee's investment in education technology, with the aim of preparing our students for the real world. While the department is incredibly disappointed that the state had to change to a paper test administration, this change in the method of delivery of the test for the majority of students in no way impacts the quality of the test. The test items or questions are 100 percent aligned to the Tennessee Academic Standards and were vetted by hundreds of teachers from across the state. We remain confident in the quality of the test regardless of whether it is delivered online or on paper.

## Accommodations, Alternate Assessment, and ACCESS for ELLs

### **30. What are the testing conditions, accessibility features, and accommodations available?**

Please see the [attached chart](#) which defines each category per content area. Additional information will be provided in the test administration manual, which is currently under revision due to the shift to paper testing.

### **31. Will we need to add flexible setting and flexible time of day to IEPs?**

Flexible setting continues to be a testing condition and is not a part of the IEP. You may group students according to their need and accommodations.

### **32. Can students use highlighters?**

Highlighters will continue to be an accessibility feature available to *all* students.

### **33. What should we do about large print and Braille? Is this now an option?**

Large print and Braille *will* be an option for districts. Additional information regarding ordering and shipment will be shared as soon as possible.

### **34. How do we order read aloud packs?**

You do *not* have to order a read aloud pack. Please note that students who were eligible to receive text-to-speech for math or ELA and social studies will remain the same. The change to a paper version does *not* impact the decision-making process regarding students who will be eligible to receive read aloud for math, ELA and social studies. The previously released guidance ([here](#)) will remain the same to determine students who are eligible to receive read aloud.

### **35. Will text-to-speech (or read aloud) for math still be an accessibility feature available to all students who were identified in advance?**

If a student was *previously* identified as requiring text-to-speech for math in order to access the text, he or she may be provided read aloud via a teacher for math.

### **36. Will IEP meetings need to be held so IEPs can be changed to reflect the different slate of accommodations (ex. text-to-speech vs. read aloud)?**

The intent of the accommodation is the same. If a student meets the guidelines for text-to-speech for ELA and social studies, a read aloud may be provided by the teacher during a paper-based testing session. Text-to-speech is simply the online version of read aloud, so the IEP does not need to be changed. Accommodations should *not* be changed to reflect the paper format of the assessment.

**37. Will students who receive extended time (IEP/504) need to be tested in a separate location?**

The manner in which a school chooses to group students is decided at the individual school level. However, the decision to test students who receive extended time with students who do not receive this accommodation may have unintended negative consequences. The student who receives extended time may no longer be motivated to complete his test once his peers leave. He or she may feel further disadvantaged because he or she is required to test longer than everyone else. It's important to remember that accommodation use should not cause a disruption. For this reason, the grouping of students with extended time and students without extended time may cause a significant disruption to the test environment and is not a recommended best practice. Extended time for students with a disability and English Learners should not exceed double time.

**38. Due to my student's disability, he requires assistive technology. How should this be handled for the paper format?**

Students should continue to use the same assistive technology devices as they do during daily instruction. Students who require assistive technology such as speech-to-text and/or the word-prediction accommodation may use their stand-alone assistive technology devices, and then, an adult may transcribe their responses onto the paper answer document. For adult transcription, a student may dictate his response to the scribe and the scribe will write his response onto the paper document. The student does not have to spell each word and the scribe may use correct capitalization and punctuation. The student must have an opportunity to review the response and edit as appropriate prior to final submission of the response.

**39. Since there was going to be a lot of writing involved with the online assessment, spell check was available for all students. Now that we are going to paper/pencil how are we addressing the spelling?**

The rubric will not change for the writing assessment. You may find additional information regarding ELA tools and scoring ([here](#)).

**40. How will the decision to move to a paper format for TNReady impact the online administration of MSAA?**

This decision will *not* impact the online administration for MSAA. The online format for MSAA was specially designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities and will adjust the complexity of the items based on student responses.

The department made the decision to move TNReady to paper and pencil because we lost confidence in the system's ability to perform consistently based on the events during the first day of testing. The MSAA is delivered on a *different* platform by a *different* vendor, and we are confident in the ability to provide MSAA as planned. MSAA was always designed to be printed from the platform based on individual need. Additional training will be provided regarding that assessment beginning on Feb. 24.

Teachers will continue to have the option to read the test items to students and enter student response as appropriate. The student should communicate his response in the same manner as during daily instruction.

We do *not* anticipate that the majority of students assessed on MSAA will independently participate in the assessment. The teacher will engage the student with the items as during daily instruction. The best practice for this population is to engage in the same high quality instruction and to use the resources provided by training as well as the resources posted to the [wiki site](#). Additional sample items may be found at <https://www.ncscassessment.org/practice> under the action "Download PDF." Once the teacher completes the online training modules and quiz, a full practice test is available.

As of now, we do *not* anticipate the MIST issues will impact the portfolio data platform for alternate science and social studies. We will address the transcription of portfolio science and social studies data into the MIST platform as soon as possible.

#### **41. How will the decision to move to a paper format for TNReady impact the online administration of ACCESS?**

The decision to move to a paper format for TNReady will *not* impact the online format for ACCESS for ELs. The online format for ACCESS for ELs is designed for the English Learner and will adjust the complexity of the items based on the student responses. The teacher no longer has to select the appropriate tier for the student due to the online format. This will allow the student to demonstrate his/her English Language proficiency to the best of his/her ability. Grades 1–3 will continue to receive paper booklets for the writing assessment, kindergarten will remain a paper based test, as will the Alternate ACCESS. The decision to move to a paper TNReady test will in *no* way impact ACCESS for ELs format, previously released guidance, or test administration.