



## Computer-Based Test Administration: Tips from the Field

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Peoria School District #150 administers computer-based assessments to approximately 9800 students in grades 2-10 three times each year. High School Learning Centers are provided the option of testing their 11th grade students as well. This is their eighth year administering computer-based assessments and their third year administering a fall/winter/spring test cycle for full assessments in both Reading & Math. All tests each session are completed within a 3 week testing window. What follows are some tips for test administration that can help districts collect and get the most from their data.

### **Develop a strong test administration framework.**

What are the goals of your assessment system? When and where will tests be administered? Who will administer them? How will your computer network structure and share the data in a timely fashion? How will the results be used in the district, in the school, in the classroom? The answers to these questions form the foundation of your computer-based assessment plan. Once the foundation of the plan is set, strategically align your technology to fit your plan. Peoria School District #150 has established a framework, a few testing guidelines, and given each Learning Center the autonomy to administer the assessments within those parameters. Their plan allows student skills to be assessed in a way that fits the unique needs of each building. The plan simultaneously provides the testing consistency necessary to ensure data collected is valid and reliable.

### **Share the plan from the beginning.**

Test results show each student's strengths and weaknesses and continually chart Reading and Math skill growth. From the outset, District #150 planned to use this data to structure learning experiences that match student needs. It is essential to share this plan with staff & students from the beginning so the assessment data can be used to drive instruction. As staff, students, and stakeholders become increasingly familiar with effective uses of learning data, a growth culture will begin to emerge.

### **Schedule assessments thoughtfully.**

Dr. LaToy Kennedy, Chief Curriculum and Instructional Officer, points to research indicating students test best in the morning. The goal of the assessment is to get an accurate reading on what students know and are able to demonstrate. Testing them at their optimal time will generate the most reliable results and lead to targeted instruction that inspires the most growth. Establishing a district-wide testing calendar within the test administration framework is also a must. [District #150's testing calendar](#) includes all district wide assessments (except a new middle school assessment, which will be included next year). Mr. Bryan Devine, who works with Peoria School District #150 in assessment and research remarked:

"To ensure that we space out testing as much as possible, we put all test events on the same page for quick and easy reference. To maximize our opportunity to achieve student growth, we schedule the Fall and Spring test windows as close to the beginning and end of the school year as possible. We allot a three-week testing window for each cycle. This is necessary due to the technology capabilities in our district. Districts with more technology can probably reduce this testing window. Increasing this window beyond three weeks makes it difficult to get accurate results due to the time between testing windows."

**Test Administration.**

Due to the nature of each building and how each building is unique, the district does not produce an administration schedule. Scheduling is at the discretion of the building administrator. Some buildings have enough technology in the classrooms to utilize those areas for testing. Some buildings choose to pull students out of a subject every day. Some buildings choose to use the intervention period built into their day. Each building does something unique and different that suits the needs of that building.

**Available Results.**

During the testing window, Peoria School District #150 uploads test events from each school every night. That data is submitted to their vendor every night and processed overnight. This means that results are available the next day for the teacher/building to use. The only limitation is that the results must be received by the vendor in the evening to ensure they are included in overnight processing. If results are received by the vendor after they begin processing their data, the results are not available until the day after (a 48 hour turnaround instead of a 24 hour turnaround).

**Utilizing Results.**

Buildings begin utilizing results immediately. Just as with test administration, each building utilizes the results differently. For instance, a building may use results to differentiate instruction within a classroom. Another building may create groups of students for more intensive instruction on areas of deficiency. Many buildings schedule interventionist meetings or district curriculum specialists to come to the building to work with the teachers. The discretion for how to use the data and which of these methods to use is at the building level. There is no district menu of options for how to utilize data and assessment results.

**Talking to kids about their data.**

A growth culture requires open and honest conversations with students about their data and what that data means. During these conversations with students, Peoria School District #150 emphasizes the importance in doing their best on the test so the school can structure the learning experience most beneficial to them and their growth. In District #150 each Learning Center has an interventionist on staff to assist with student growth conversations. The district also stresses the importance of involving the classroom teacher in test administration. Through years of computerized test administration, they have found the presence of the classroom teacher inspires students to do their best. They have also found involving the classroom teacher helps embed the use of learning data into daily classroom instruction.

**Handling students who move in.**

In Peoria, it's all about the testing window. If a new student arrives while the window is open, every effort is made to test them before the window closes so their educational experience can be personalized from the start. If they arrive after the window closes they are simply tested during the next testing session of the cycle.

**Test re-takes.**

Test re-takes result in loss of instructional time for that child. Therefore, in Peoria School District #150, there must be a valid reason for a test re-take. A student can't simply re-take a test because they don't like the score. This emphasizes the importance of having the student's teacher in the testing room. Not only do classroom teachers inspire students to do their best, they also monitor the behavior of each student in the room. If the teacher recognizes an abnormality, they stop the assessment for that child and schedule a retake on a later day. The goal is to accurately determine what each child knows and are able to demonstrate in order to maximize instructional time in the classroom.

For more information on Peoria School District #150's computerized test administration protocol, contact Dr. LaToy Kennedy, Chief Curriculum and Instructional Officer at [LATOY.KENNEDY@psd150.org](mailto:LATOY.KENNEDY@psd150.org).