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December 17, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: System Superintendents

FROM: Ida H. Love, Ph.D.
Deputy Superintendent
Curriculum and Instruction

Subject: End of Course Tests

This memorandum is the second in a series of communications intended to help clarify issues surrounding Georgia's End of Course Tests (EOCT). The information in this memo mainly pertains to the reporting of December 2003 EOCT scores and to the administration of the spring 2004 tests. It follows an October 9, 2003 memorandum on this same topic, and provides guidance on decisions that have been reached by Georgia's EOCT Task Force and the Georgia Department of Education in the weeks since the previous memo was released.

Guidance on some EOCT issues is still being developed. We plan to provide a third memorandum in February, describing lessons learned during the December EOCT administration. Additionally, a series of EOCT workshops designed to gather your input on the December administration and to share lessons that were learned, will be held across the state during the week of January 26-30. We also hope to be able to discuss Spring 2004 EOCT scoring options at that time.

In what cases must middle grades students take an EOCT?

It is most likely that a middle grades student would be in a position to take the Algebra I EOCT, although it is possible that other EOCT courses could be taken by a student before his/her freshman year. Regardless of the content area and grade, any student taking a course that is taught following the QCCs for an EOCT course must take the EOCT. This applies even if the class is not intended to allow students to earn credit toward high school graduation.

Are EOCT required for AP courses?

Although AP courses are designed to award college credit for students whose performance in the course and on the AP Exam meet certain standards, AP students are also awarded high school credit for the course. Consequently, students who take an AP course that is covered by an EOCT will be required to take the EOCT. They may, at their option, also take the AP test.

Are EOCT required for Home Study students?

Students who take courses that are covered by an EOCT at home must take the appropriate EOCT if they decide to enroll in a public school. The diagnostic value of the EOCT will allow public schools to make more informed decisions about the placement of students who are transferring credit from a home school environment.

How will the new curriculum content standards affect the EOCT?

The EOCT are criterion-referenced tests that assess students' mastery of the QCC content standards for a particular course. Each question on the current editions of the EOCT can be linked to a specific standard in Georgia's QCC. The department is dedicated to the premise that mandated tests must accurately assess what is taught in Georgia's classrooms. As the new Georgia performance standards are phased in over the next several years, test items that are correlated with the new standards will be incorporated in each EOCT test. In the mean time, the current EOCT will continue to provide valid and reliable information on the extent to which students are learning the content standards that are specified in the QCC.

What is the current status of local scoring options?

Although local scoring presents logistic and security challenges, other states have overcome these issues. The Georgia Department of Education and Pearson Educational Measurement (formerly, NCS Pearson) are negotiating ways in which school systems could elect to calculate the raw scores of certain students' tests before they are sent for scoring. At least in the near future, this option would only apply in cases where schools need to know a student's score very quickly (for example, a senior whose graduation hinges upon receiving credit in an EOCT course).

How will December 2003 EOCT scores be reported?

For the December 2003 administration, Pearson Educational Measurement will provide labels for inclusion on each tested student's permanent record (transcript), and a class summary roster. School, system, and state aggregate data will be reported by the department.

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It is expected that the same reports will be provided for the spring test. The December and spring reports will be shipped together. Electronic classroom reports are expected to be available in late April.

How will EOCT scores be reported for subsequent test administrations?

Initially, teachers will be provided with an electronic report of their classroom rosters and EOCT scores for each student. Subsequently, school, system, and state summaries will be generated. Additionally, an item analysis of student performance on the EOCT will be available to assist teachers and school administrators with remediation and curriculum decisions.

What scale will be used to report scale scores?

The final format of the electronic classroom roster is under development and will most likely include raw scores and scaled scores. To facilitate the inclusion of the EOCT score as a 20% component in determining whether students earn course credit, the classroom score report will include students' scores on a scale of 0-100.

What changes are proposed in the Statewide Passing Score rule?

At its December meeting, the State Board of Education initiated several changes to Rule 160-4-2-.13 Statewide Passing Score. Most importantly, the proposed change would delay until fall 2004 the requirement that EOCT scores be used to help determine whether a student earns credit for an EOCT course. If adopted, this rule change will become effective in February 2004.

As always, we greatly appreciate your help in successfully launching and refining the EOCT program. Working together, we have brought the EOCT to the point where it is a useful tool in helping us measure our progress toward the goal of leading the nation in improving student achievement.

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cc: Principals
System Test Coordinators
Special Education Coordinators
ESOL Coordinators
Curriculum Directors