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MEMORANDUM

TO: System Superintendents

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

SUBJECT: End-of-Course-Tests (EOCT)

As you know, Georgia's End of Course Tests (EOCT) will be administered for the first time from December 1st through 19th, 2003. Please accept this memo as written clarification of the procedures needed for the short-term implementation of this test. We hope this information will help ensure that each of the eight EOCT tests will be successfully administered and used to support improved student achievement.

The EOCT are a new approach to statewide testing in Georgia. As often happens with large-scale innovations, every step forward in the EOCT program has produced new and difficult policy issues. While this memo addresses many of these issues, definitive answers to some of these questions will be forthcoming upon resolution of these difficult policy issues. We are, however, making every effort to provide you with information that will ensure a successful first-time administration of this testing program.

We expect that additional questions will arise during the process of administering the first full operational EOCT in December 2003. Through open, honest, and on-going dialog within Georgia's education community, these questions can and will be resolved in a deliberate manner that supports the integrity and usefulness of these tests. As a part of this process, we are scheduling a second round of pre-assessment workshops for January 26-30, 2004. We will hold these meetings in five locations across the state and cover lessons learned from the December 2003 administration, as well as test administration procedures and scoring options that will be in effect for the spring 2004 administration. (Question 6, below, provides additional information on scoring options.)

The following set of questions represents those that are most frequently asked, and are crucial to the successful initial administration of the EOCT program.

1. What courses are to be tested?

There are eight End of Course Tests:

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|---------------------|---|
| 1. Algebra I | 5. Economics |
| 2. Geometry | 6. U.S. History |
| 3. Physical Science | 7. Ninth Grade Literature and Composition |
| 4. Biology | 8. American Literature and Composition |

2. Who is to take the test in December 2003?

Any student, regardless of grade-level, who completes all requirements for any of the eight EOCT courses in fall semester 2003, must take the appropriate EOCT. Generally, these students will fall into one of three categories:

- Students following a block schedule format, who are completing a full year course in the fall semester.
- Students following a traditional 36-week schedule who are completing a course during one semester (most typically, economics).
- Students who previously completed the first semester of a course and are completing the second and final semester during fall semester.

Given the diversity of high school programs of study across the state, there may be other situations in which a student should take one or more EOCT in fall 2003. For specific guidance, please contact Ms. Phyllis Blackmon, EOCT project coordinator, at (404) 657-9808 or by e-mail at pblackmo@doe.k12.ga.us.

3. Between December 1 and 19, when are the tests to be given?

Tests may be given at any time during the testing window. EOCT do not have to be given on consecutive days. A system may decide to administer the EOCT using a two-day testing option. Ideally, the two-day scenario would fall during a single week. However, in cases where scheduling the tests within the week would cause significant scheduling complications, the option exists to administer the first half of the test on a Friday, with the second half being administered on the following Monday.

All make-up tests must be given within the December 1st through December 19th testing window.

4. How long will it take to administer the tests?

The EOCT were designed to be administered in a single 100-135 minute period, with a short break being provided between the first and the second halves of the test. This administration schedule is still an option; however, systems may also elect to give the EOCT using the two-day format. The two-day option reduces the administration time to 50-68 minutes per session. The two-day testing option was created to offer schools some flexibility in scheduling EOCT during a class period. Alternately, the first half of a test may be given in the morning and the second half that same afternoon.

If the two-day administration option is used, examiners and proctors must assure that students taking the first half of the test do not look at, or answer questions on, the second half of the test. Similarly, students may not go back to the first half once they have moved on to the second.

5. Will calculators be allowed?

Calculators may be used during the Algebra I EOCT administration. Systems must follow the same rules that have been established for calculator use on the math portion of the Georgia High School Graduation Tests. Specifically, this means that graphing calculators and calculators with the capacity to store text are not allowed. Examiners and/or proctors should evaluate and approve all calculator use prior to testing.

Keep in mind that all EOCT are designed to be calculator-neutral. That is, using a calculator will not give a student an advantage on the test. If a student is regularly taught using a calculator that is not permitted on the EOCT and GHSGT, the student will not be put at a disadvantage by not using that calculator on the test. However, teachers should assure that instruction includes opportunities for students to work EOCT-like problems by hand. Sample EOCT questions are available on the Department of Education's Web site (www.doe.k12.ga.us).

6. How will the tests be scored?

The December 2003 tests will be sent to Pearson Educational Measurement (formerly NCS-Pearson) for scoring, standard setting, and reporting. There are no other scoring options for the December administration of the test. The Department of Education is working with Pearson Education Measurement in an effort to offer a number of other scoring options, including local scoring and rapid response scoring. The Department of Education and stakeholder advisory groups are carefully considering all available options to increase local flexibility, and to assure that students' scores are reported in a timely and useful way.

7. When will the results be available?

The results of the December 2003 administration will be used for standard setting. The standard setting procedures are scheduled to take place during the week of February 23, 2004. We expect to submit recommended standards for approval by the State Board of Education at the March 2004 meeting. If the standards are approved at that time, score reports are expected to be delivered to systems in April 2004.

The schedule for the return of future EOCT results is presently two weeks from the date of the receipt of the systems' answer documents. The Department of Education is presently exploring options with Pearson Education Measurement to provide the results on an even shorter time schedule.

8. How are the results to be used?

The scaled scores that will result from the December 2003 standard setting will be an accurate assessment of each student's knowledge of course content. However, these

scores will not be available to systems before April 2004. Because scores will not be available until April 2004 (due to the procedures that must be completed and approved by the State Board of Education in conducting the standard setting process), scores should not be used as part of students' course grades.

Although EOCT scores should not be used as part of the formula for calculating course grades, local systems are required to enter EOCT scores on students' transcripts.

9. How do the tests apply to virtual courses and other non-traditional course formats?

It is the intention of the Department of Education and the State Board of Education that all students enrolled in Georgia schools take the End-of-Course Tests for the applicable courses in which they are enrolled. In most cases, these courses are required for graduation. For instance, American Literature is a required course. It carries the "r" designation in Rule IDA(2). All students who are enrolled in your school should take the EOCT in American Literature unless a student transferred into your school after having taken American Literature somewhere else (i.e., another state). Rule JBC(4) applies in this circumstance. However, if a student is enrolled in your school and you allow him or her to take American Literature through another venue, such as PSO or an on-line course, you should make sure that the course taken in the alternate venue is consistent with the QCC and that the student takes the EOCT for that course before receiving credit. If your system awards credit for an on-line or PSO course, which does not correspond to a course that follows the QCC, that course should carry elective credit only and not core credit.

10. When are the next EOCT administrations scheduled?

Spring 2004	April 19 – May 14
Summer 2004	June 28 – July 28
Winter 2004	November 29 – December 17

11. Who is to take the test in subsequent administrations?

Any student, regardless of grade level, who completes a course or set of courses for which credit in any of the eight EOCT content areas is being awarded must take the EOCT. For example, if a student takes an Algebra I course over four semesters rather than over two semesters, the Algebra I EOCT is to be taken at the end of the fourth semester.

A middle school student must be administered an EOCT in cases where the course follows the Georgia QCC.

12. What is the policy for students who pass the EOCT but fail the course, or vice versa?

The requirements of the standard setting process mandate that EOCT scores from the December 2003 administration only be placed on the students' transcripts. As previously stated, the December 2003 EOCT scores must not be used to determine credit or course

grades. The mechanics of the use of EOCT scores for the spring 2004 EOCT is under study and is expected to be finalized in early December.

13. What is the policy for students who transfer in credit from elsewhere?

Transfer students who have completed a course in an accredited public school in another state, for which the EOCT is required in Georgia, will not be required to take the EOCT if the course is accepted by the system as a transferable credit.

We would like to reassure you that the Department of Education and the Superintendent's EOCT Task Force, whose membership includes superintendents, local system administrators, teachers, and members of the State Board of Education (SBOE) are working toward establishing an initial set of recommendations that will be presented to the SBOE by December 2003. These recommendations include, but are not limited to, establishing procedures for incorporating EOCT scores into a student's course grade and developing rules to clarify the Georgia statute as it pertains to End-of-Course-Tests.

IHL:dj

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