

Smarter Balanced Assessment Team

For more information or to be added to the newsletter distribution list, please contact:

Linda Moreno

Assessment Coordinator for
Special Populations
802-479-1309

Linda.Moreno@vermont.gov

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Questions?

Please contact:

Help Desk (AIR) for Test
Administration & Test Delivery
Technologies

vthelpdesk@air.org

844-218-1184

Michael Hock (AOE) for
Policies and Procedures

Michael.Hock@vermont.gov

802-479-1288

Linda Moreno for
Accessibility and
Accommodations

Linda.Moreno@vermont.gov

802-479-1309

Gabriel McGann for
Science & PE Assessments,
Exemptions & Appeals

Gabriel.McGann@vermont.gov

802-479-1444

Goma Mabika
NAEP

goma.mabika@vermont.gov

802-479-1366



Message from the Director:

Student Alerts

Although it happens every year, it never ceases to surprise me that students frequently include very personal and deeply concerning information in their test responses. They write about being abused, wanting to run away, wanting to stop living or wanting to harm other students. Fortunately, one of the important services provided by our colleagues at AIR is something called Student Alerts. Whenever one of their scorers runs across a student response that suggests the student may be a threat to self or others, they contact me and I contact either the district test administrator or the building principal. I know of at least one situation where a student was seriously contemplating suicide and the Student Alert system helped the school help the student.

In the past, only the human scorers were able to identify Student Alerts. Given that nearly three quarters of the test is machine scored, there has been a good chance that we might miss one of these at-risk students. Fortunately, this year AIR has introduced a new system called Hotline that scans student tests for a range of alert words and phrases, and then automatically sends an alert message to the AOE TIDE account. This, of course, is a great piece of technology. However, it works so well that it sends an alert if the student writes something as innocuous as "I need help," something we are learning happens frequently, and the scans include both summative and interim assessments and even student entries on the digital notepad.

We want to treat each and every one of these alerts as a potential risk, but unfortunately, we can't make a personal phone call for every one we receive. We have decided to treat phrases like "I need help" as a low to moderate risk and will follow up with an e-mail to the district and school administrators. We will continue to make personal calls for student entries that are clearly high risk.

We are grateful to AIR for finding another excellent way to use technologies to make a better test for our students.

A Friendly Reminder to Our DAs

Let me start this by saying that the lion's share of the credit for making our testing program successful goes to our fabulous cadre of District Test Administrators. So, I hesitate to nag you about anything. Let's just call this a friendly reminder. Recently we've received some calls and emails from teachers who clearly had not been privy to some key information like the fact that the science testing window opened on May 1st and was going to be using the same delivery system as the Smarter Balanced tests. Please keep in mind that the only way the AOE can get information to the teachers who

will be administering the tests is through our DAs. We're hoping that you will pass on information from this newsletter, inform educators about new training materials on the assessment portal, and just in general, make sure that they are informed and prepared. Also, please keep in mind that because of a required action stemming from our federal assessment peer review, DAs will be asked to certify that students were assessed by individuals who were sufficiently trained. If you haven't seen it already, please take a look at the **DA's Certification of Proper Test Administration** form that is located in the [Tools for School Leaders](#) page on the assessment portal. You will need to submit this form to me when your district completes testing. As always, thanks for your hard work and cooperation.

Michael Hock
State Assessment Director

Update: Alternate ELA/MA/Science Assessment

Below are important dates to save regarding this year's alternate assessment.

May 7th - We will have a training walkthrough/orientation posted to the website.

May 10th – We will host a call-in “Office Hour” session to go over FAQs and to answer specific field questions. Call-in information will be sent separately, but we are anticipating scheduling it from 3:00 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

May 14th – Test window will open. We will send a live link to District Test Coordinators and Special Education Directions to distribute to case managers.

June 15th – Testing window closes

Please contact Chris Kane at 802-479-1441 or christopher.kane@vermont.gov if you

Vermont Science Assessment (VTSA): Date Correction & Opening Day

Vermont's full census field testing window is now open (as of May 1, 2018) and will close on **June 1, 2018**. Field test items have been finalized and a big thank you goes out to our educators who have given their time and energy to review these items for both content and fairness (sensitivity and bias.)

The assessment will look extremely different from the previous NECAP assessment, which focused more around the linear GEs that preceded the three-dimensional NGSS. The grade levels that will be assessed also match the layout of NGSS as the standards are grade banded until the end of grade 5. The VTSA will have a variety of different item types, which assess all three dimensions of the NGSS and will include items like equation response, evidence-based selected response, grid items, multi-select items, matching and multiple choice. In addition, the assessment will have a variety of simulations and animations to help students assess the phenomena of each cluster or stand-alone item.

Accommodations

Please be mindful that this year District test administrators will still need to enter the Text-to-Speech accommodation in TIDE, and School Test Coordinators (STCs) will enter the remaining Accommodations and Designated Supports.

Continued pg. 3



Please see the [Vermont Science Assessment Accessibility Guide](#) to brush up on the accessibility tools available.

Scribes

All scribes will need to use the Data Entry Interface (DEI) to enter student work into the Test Delivery System. This must happen during or immediately after assessing the student. Also posted is the [VTSA Test Administrator Manual](#) where you can find the assessment recommended schedule. It is important to note that the VTSA is not a timed assessment. The times provided are only recommendations. Your school or individual students may need more time.

VTPEA Updates

The VTPEA testing window is May 1st – May 31st! We have two updates for this year's census-pilot test administration:

- 1) Smaller independent schools are able to test their own students using the dedicated independent school license. If an independent school has not yet identified their PE assessment administrator, [you can do so here](#). Once the PE assessment administrator is identified, they will be given credentials to use the FitnessGram web software and sent links to all web based VTPEA trainings.
- 2) The reporting spreadsheet for VTPEA, students who access the assessment through Brockport, or non-participants [has been posted here](#).

The Submission form, Cognito, will be made available by May 11th. Please feel free to reach out to Gabe McGann 802-479-1444 or gabriel.mcgann@vermont.gov with any questions.

Smarter Balanced: New Test Monitoring Brochure

As the Smarter Balanced Assessment closes in on the final few weeks, District and School Tests Administrators should begin monitoring testing progress and looking for any testing anomalies. A [Test Monitoring Brochure](#) was created to help with this work.



Question of the Week

Has any progress been made to allow speech-to-text (STT) to operate on Chromebooks?

This week at the Smarter Balanced Collaboration Conference, we were informed that a “think tank” has formed and conversations between Google programmers and multiple vendors, of which AIR is one, will begin to work on code that would allow a secure means of accessing cloud-based STT on Chromebooks. However, we may not see the fruits of this work until 2020.