

EXPLORE Frequently Asked Questions

Administration

1. Who takes EXPLORE?

All students enrolled in grade 8 according to their WVEIS records, even those who are repeating grade 8, take EXPLORE. The only exceptions are those who participate in the Alternate Performance Task Assessment (APTA) (WVBE Policy 2340: *West Virginia Measures of Academic Progress*, §4.6 Program Regulations).

2. What does the school do with unused EXPLORE labels and answer folders?

Unused labels and answer folders are to be destroyed by the Principal or Building Level Coordinator at the conclusion of administering EXPLORE. Neither the labels nor the answer folders can be used the next year.

3. May students write in their EXPLORE test books?

Yes. All scratch work is to be done in the EXPLORE test booklets. Each student writes her/his name on the front of the test booklet in the place provided. The student's EXPLORE test booklet is returned to the student with the EXPLORE student score report.

4. May students use highlighters in their EXPLORE test books?

No. Highlighters, markers, colored pencils and pens are not to be used in the test booklet. Students must use #2 pencils to mark responses on the answer folder.

5. What type of questions are on the EXPLORE tests?

All of the questions on EXPLORE are selected response/multiple choice items. For English, reading and science, the students are provided four responses from which to select the answer. For mathematics, students are presented with five responses.

6. If a student moves into the school during the testing window, is the school obligated to administer EXPLORE to that student?

Yes, unless the student came from an in-county school or another West Virginia county school and the new school has confirmation that the student has already taken the EXPLORE test or is eligible to participate in APTA.

7. For a student who moves from one county to another prior to taking EXPLORE, can the answer folder with the pre-ID label for that student be forwarded to the new school?

No. The county and school information in the bar code of the pre-ID label will not be correct.

8. Is EXPLORE an untimed test like WESTEST?

No. **EXPLORE is a timed test.** The time limits for each academic test are to be observed exactly as stated in the *EXPLORE Room Supervisor's Manual* unless the student has an IEP, 504 Plan or a LEP Assessment Participation Document that defines extended time as an assessment accommodation.

9. What constitutes an EXPLORE testing irregularity?

A testing irregularity is defined in WVBE Policy 2340 as “any unexpected event that significantly disrupts the testing environment” that may influence the performance of two or more students.

10. If a test booklet and/or answer folder is contaminated during testing, what does the Principal/Building Level Coordinator need to do?

The Principal/Building Level Coordinator should destroy the test booklet and/or answer folder unless instructed otherwise by the County Test Coordinator. The student should be provided with a new test booklet and/or answer folder when testing is resumed.

11. If an EXPLORE answer folder is contaminated during testing, who transcribes the student's responses?

The Principal/Building Level Coordinator should transfer the student's responses from the contaminated answer folder to a new one. Upon completion of the transcription, the *EXPLORE Scribe Verification Form* is to be completed. (See Appendix 8 in the *EXPLORE Administration Manual*.)

12. Must Examiners be state, county or RESA employees?

Yes. An Examiner must be a currently employed educator and/or approved employee of the state, county or RESA, or an educator of a private or parochial school with a valid West Virginia teaching license who has been trained and has signed an *Examiner's/Proctor's/Scribe's Secure Materials and Test Procedures Agreement* (WVBE Policy 2340 §3.12).

13. May a teacher administer EXPLORE who has not received training as per WVBE Policy 2340?

No. The Principal/Building Level Coordinator must provide training at least five instructional days prior to the beginning of testing. The signed *Verification of Training* form must be on file with the County Administrator/Principal.

14. May an aide administer EXPLORE?

Yes. The aide must meet the requirements described in WVBE Policy 2340 (§3.12) to be an Examiner, have been trained and signed the *Examiner's/Scribe's/Proctor's Secure Materials and Test Procedures Agreement* and have prior approval from the Office of Assessment and Accountability to administer EXPLORE to a designated individual student with a disability.

15. Who is responsible for training the Examiner(s)?

The Principal/Building Level Coordinator is responsible for training Examiners. All Examiners must sign an *Examiner's/Proctor's/Scribe's Secure Materials and Test Procedures Agreement* (WVDE Policy 2340 §3.12).

16. Who is responsible for training the Scribe(s)?

The Principal/Building Level Coordinator is responsible for training Examiners. A Scribe must be a trained Examiner who signed a *WVBE Secure Materials and Test Procedures Agreement* (WVBE Policy 2340 §3.36).

17. May an individual serve as both the Examiner and Scribe for a student with a disability?

Yes, if the individual meets the requirements to be both an Examiner and a Scribe. See question #12 for the requirements to serve as an Examiner.

18. May student teachers and counselor interns be involved in the administration of EXPLORE?

No, unless the student teacher or counselor intern meets the requirements described in WVBE Policy 2340 §3.12 to be an Examiner. See question #12 for the requirements to serve as an Examiner.

Student teachers and counselor interns who do not meet the requirements to serve as an Examiner may not administer EXPLORE, observe the administration of EXPLORE or help prepare testing materials.

19. May a substitute, short-term or long-term, administer EXPLORE?

Yes. Substitutes on a county's approved substitute list meet the definition of an Examiner, because they possess a valid West Virginia teaching license and are considered to be currently employed with a county. The substitute will need to be trained as an Examiner and sign an *Examiner's/Proctor's/Scribe's Secure Materials and Test Procedures Agreement*.

20. May a staff member with an alternative or temporary certification administer EXPLORE?

Yes. Staff members with an alternative certification or a temporary certificate still meet the definition of an Examiner. The staff member will need to be trained as an Examiner and sign an *Examiner's/Proctor's/Scribe's Secure Materials and Test Procedures Agreement*.

21. What do we do about substitutes who must be called in at the last minute?

Some county school systems elect to train all school staff to administer EXPLORE in case of teacher absences. Only substitutes who hold a Professional Teaching Certificate, have been trained as an Examiner, and signed the appropriate security agreement may administer EXPLORE.

22. Is EXPLORE a secure test? When is the EXPLORE test no longer considered secure?

Yes. EXPLORE is a secure test until the students receive their score reports. The score reports include an item analysis with each student's answer selections reported as well as whether or not the choice was correct. The correct response is provided for any incorrect answer. The students' test booklets are to be returned with their score reports.

EXPLORE is administered across the nation in other states besides West Virginia and in large school districts. The same EXPLORE test booklet will be used by any student testing in the same national testing window as West Virginia. Security of the test is to be maintained until the national testing window closes.

Therefore, EXPLORE is a secure test until the students received their score reports. At that time, EXPLORE is no longer considered to be a secure test; the questions and answers may be discussed by school staff and students for instructional purposes.

23. Where should the EXPLORE test booklets be stored until returned to the students with their score reports?

The EXPLORE test booklets are to be stored in a secured, locked, central location at the school as per the requirements of WVBE Policy 2340 until returned to the students.

24. Do the requirements for training, test administration and security as defined in WVBE Policy 2340 apply to EXPLORE?

Yes. WVBE Policy 2340 provides “an operational framework to administer an effective and efficient statewide assessment program, provide procedures to protect the integrity of test data, and support the use of assessment data to improve instruction” (§126-14-2. Purpose) and requires both appropriate professional practices within the WV-MAP as well as appropriate professional conduct. The *Testing Code of Ethics* (Appendix A) supplements the practices and procedures set forth by WVBE Policy 2340.

25. Is there a breach form for EXPLORE?

No. In the event that students would need to be retested on EXPLORE because of invalidation or testing violation, the County Test Coordinator is responsible for contacting ACT to make any necessary arrangements for a retest and any fees associated with the retest.

26. Must EXPLORE be administered in one day?

Yes. The four academic tests of EXPLORE are to be completed in the same day in the order listed in the *Room Supervisor’s Manual*.

There are no make-ups for students who do not complete all four tests during the scheduled test day.

27. When is the non-test component of EXPLORE to be administered?

ACT recommends that the non-test section be administered during a separate session **before** the test day. Administration time will be approximately 65-75 minutes.

All information needed for the non-test component is in the *Instructions for Completing Your Answer Folder*. Students do not need their test booklets to complete the non-test component.

28. Must all schools in the county administer EXPLORE on the same day?

The County Test Coordinator sets the testing schedule for the county. It is recommended that all schools in the same county test on the same day because of security issues concerning the sharing of answers between friends/relatives at different schools.

29. May EXPLORE be administered in the afternoon?

Yes. However, it is recommended that EXPLORE be administered in the morning.

30. Is there a certain order in which the EXPLORE content tests are to be administered?

Yes. The four academic tests must be administered in the following order: English, mathematics, reading and science.

31. What are the options for home-instructed students?

As per WVBE Policy 2340, §4.10, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of a home-instructed student(s) must notify the County Test Coordinator of the intention to participate in EXPLORE at least two months prior to the testing window or by a date determined by the County Test Coordinator. Home-instructed students who take EXPLORE must test in the county in which they reside at a school or location assigned by the County Test Coordinator.

All educators and non-public school students shall be required to follow all testing guidelines and procedures set forth (see WVBE Policy 2340, §4.10 and “Home-Instructed Students (Home-Schooled)” in the *EXPLORE Administration Manual*).

32. May calculators be used on the EXPLORE science test?

No. The use of a calculator is not allowed for the science test. Calculators may be used only for the mathematics test.

33. Must students use a calculator on the EXPLORE mathematics test?

No. Students are not required to use a calculator on the EXPLORE mathematics test. All problems can be solved without a calculator. If a student use a calculator, it must be one of the types of calculators approved by ACT and modified according to ACT requirements. (See “General Test Administration” in the *EXPLORE Administration Manual* or “Use of Calculators on the Mathematics Test” in the *Room Supervisor’s Manual*).

34. What type of calculator is permissible?

Students may use any four-function, scientific, or graphing calculator, unless it has a built-in computer algebra system.

- The following types of calculators are permitted, but only after they are modified as noted:
 - Graphing calculators except those with a typewriter-style keypad (known as QWERTY) or one that includes a computer algebra system (CAS).
 - Calculators with paper tape; *the tape must be removed.*
 - Calculators that make noise; *the sound must be turned off.*
 - Calculators that can communicate wirelessly with other calculators; *the infrared data port must be completely covered with heavy opaque material, such as duct tape or electrician’s tape.*
 - Calculators that have power cords; *all power/electrical cords must be removed.*
- Students may use a calculator provided by the school or a personal calculator that meets the above listed criteria.
- Hand-held minicomputers, personal digital assistants or laptop computers may **not** be used.
- All types of memory, including standard memory, ROM and flash ROM, **must be cleared** to factory default both **before** and **after** testing. The Principal or Building Level Coordinator will determine how this will be done.

ACT recommends reviewing the information available at www.actstudent.org/EXPLORE/tips/calculator.html or calling 800/498-6481 for information T=to be certain that a particular calculator may be used.

35. May West Virginia private or parochial schools participate in the EXPLORE administration?

Yes, if the school has notified the County Test Coordinator of the school's intent to participate at least two months prior to the testing window or by a date determined by the County Test Coordinator **and** has been given approval by the Office of Assessment and Accountability to administer EXPLORE. The school must have at least one staff member eligible to serve as an Examiner. (See WVBE Policy 2340 Definitions §3.12 and Program Regulations §4.11).

Letters of invitation to participate in the West Virginia statewide assessment program are sent to private or parochial school principals at the beginning of each school year requesting their intent to participate. **Prior to testing with EXPLORE, approval to administer EXPLORE must be obtained from the Office of Assessment and Accountability.**

36. Will students attending private or parochial schools receive EXPLORE pre-ID labels?

No. Information on these students is not maintained within WVEIS as it is for students enrolled in West Virginia public schools. Thus, West Virginia is not able to provide ACT with information on these students for pre-identification.

37. For students without pre-ID EXPLORE labels, who grids the student information on the answer folders?

The Principal/Building Level Coordinator is responsible for manually gridding student information on blank answer folders for students without pre-ID labels. Under no circumstances should any student manually grid in his or her own information.

38. Who does the school contact for additional EXPLORE testing materials?

The Principal/Building Level Coordinator is to contact the County Test Coordinator for additional testing materials.

39. Is guessing allowed on the EXPLORE tests?

Specific instructions about guessing are printed on the back cover of the test booklet. Students are encouraged to answer every question even if they must

guess. ACT does not penalize the student for wrong answers. The score of any student is based only on the number of questions answered correctly.

40. Will the EXPLORE test booklets be numbered in the same manner as the WESTEST test booklets?

No. There is not a unique tracking number for each EXPLORE test booklet. Each test booklet has a place for the student to write her/his name so the student's booklet may be returned with the student report. However, the county or school may choose to number the test booklets.

Accommodations

41. Does the school complete a WVS.326 Print Special Education Student Testing Options for EXPLORE?

No. Schools are only required to complete this form for the WESTEST reading/language arts, mathematics and science tests. A school may decide to use this form to ensure that all students with IEPs are provided the accommodations they are to receive during participation in EXPLORE.

42. Must students be provided the assessment accommodations as defined by the IEP, Section 504 Plan or LEP Assessment Participation Document?

Yes. WVBE Policy 2340 stipulates that “all public school students enrolled in 8th grade, except those participating in the APTA shall participate in the ACT EXPLORE assessment with accommodations as determined by their respective IEP Teams, Section 504 Committees, or LEP Committees” (§126-14-4.6 Program Regulations). Refer to the *Guidelines for Participation of Students with Disabilities in WV Measures of Academic Progress* for additional information.

43. Does ACT approve accommodations for EXPLORE as they do for the ACT?

No. The students are to receive the assessment accommodations as outlined in their respective IEPs, 504 Plans, or LEP Assessment Participation Documents.

44. How does the school request a large print or Braille test book?

Students needing a large print or Braille test book will be identified in the pre-identification file that the WVDE submits to ACT. Should additional special testing materials be needed, the Principal/Building Level Coordinator is to contact the County Test Coordinator.

45. May the EXPLORE **reading test** be read to a student?

Yes. Reading EXPLORE tests, including both the English and reading content tests, is an allowable accommodation for students with disabilities and/or limited English proficiency. The read-out loud accommodation must be documented in the student's IEP, Section 504 Plan, or LEP Assessment Participation Document.

46. May students with limited English proficiency (LEP) use a bilingual dictionary?

Yes, if the student's LEP Committee has determined using a bilingual dictionary is appropriate and has documented the decision using the LEP Assessment Participation Document (<http://wvconnections.k12.wv.us/assessment.html>).

Return of Materials

47. What does the school do with the used student answer folders once testing is completed?

The Principal/Building Level Coordinator follows the directions to complete the school header sheet, places the used EXPLORE answer folders in the envelope provided by ACT and returns the envelope (unsealed) to the County Test Coordinator.

48. Can the used EXPLORE answer folders be put in the same mailing box as the used PLAN answer folders for return to ACT for scoring?

No. Sending both sets of answer folders in the same box might result with a set of answer folders being scored incorrectly.

The Principal/Building Level Coordinator will return to the CTC the used EXPLORE answer folders. The CTC will return all of the used EXPLORE answer folders for public, private/parochial and home-instructed students to ACT together.

49. What should the school/county do with unused EXPLORE test booklets at the conclusion of testing?

The school or county may destroy any unused test booklets at the conclusion of the EXPLORE administration. The school and county may wish to keep the

unused EXPLORE test booklets for instructional use once the students have their test booklets returned with their score reports and EXPLORE is no longer a secure test.

50. Is there a Student/Group List (SGL) that needs to be completed for EXPLORE?

No. There are no SGLs for either EXPLORE or PLAN.

51. What should be done with unused answer folders with pre-ID labels?

The Principal/Building Level Coordinator is to destroy these unless directed otherwise by the County Test Coordinator.

Reports

52. What reports for EXPLORE does the school receive?

The school will receive the following reports:

Student Roster – lists the tested students alphabetically showing test scores, Interest Inventory results, tentative career and educational plans, estimated range of PLAN Composite scores and self-reported needs for help.

School Profile Summary Report – multi-table summary of the aggregated test results and self-reported student information.

Early Intervention Rosters – lists of students who 1) reported that they do not plan to complete high school or have no post-high school education plans, 2) expressed a need for help in one or more selected areas and 3) scored at or below the national 10th percentile for students in the national norming study.

Presentation Packet – summary of the school's EXPLORE results in chart form, illustrating three-year trends in average scores as well as the current results.

School Item-Response Summary Report – provides tables describing item by item student performance. Item responses are categorized by test (e.g., English), by subscore (e.g., Usage/Mechanics) and by content area (e.g., Punctuation) and provide comparisons to other students taking the same test form.

School College Readiness Standards Report – gives the percentage of students earning scores in the six score ranges for each of the content areas. Local percentages can be compared with the performance of all 8th grade students in the

norm group and with a subgroup of college-bound students who scored in the same score range.

53. What reports does the county receive?

District Profile Summary Report – multi-table summary of aggregated test results and self-reported student information combining the records of all of the county schools.

Presentation Packet – summary of the county’s EXPLORE results in chart form and comparisons of the EXPLORE results of the individual schools in the county with county-wide and national results.

District Item-Response Summary Report – provides tables describing item by item student performance. Item responses are categorized by test (e.g, English), by subscore (e.g., Usage/Mechanics) and by content area (e.g., Punctuation) and provide comparisons to other students taking the same test form.

District College Readiness Standards Report – gives the percentage of students earning scores in the six score ranges for each of the content areas. Local percentages can be compared with the performance of all 8th grade students in the norm group and with a subgroup of college-bound students who scored in the same score range.

54. What are the ACT College Readiness Standards?

The ACT College Readiness Standards are sets of statements that represent widely held learning goals or expectations of what students are learning in middle school that are important for success in high school and beyond for all four content areas assessed by EXPLORE: English, mathematics, reading and science. The standards describe the types of skills, strategies and understandings typically demonstrated by students who score in particular score ranges. See <http://act.org/standard/>.

55. What are the ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores?

The ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores are early indicators of likely college success. The EXPLORE and PLAN Benchmark Scores are indicative of probable readiness for college-level work by the time the student graduates from high school. This information can be used to help students improve their academic readiness for college-level work.

56. What is the ACT World-of-Work Map?

The World-of-Work Map has been developed by ACT to present an overview of the major regions, land-marks and work-task climates of the work world. Information on more than 1,100 occupations is summarized into six career clusters and 26 career areas.

NCLB Accountability

57. Will EXPLORE results be used for NCLB accountability for schools/counties/state?

No. Although EXPLORE is one component of the statewide assessment program, it is not used as the accountability test in middle school for NCLB.

58. Are the EXPLORE student results used to determine whether or not the school and county have made AYP?

No. Although EXPLORE is one component of WV-MAP, student, school or county, results are not used within calculations for AYP measures.