

Please see **2 IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS** below regarding: 1) EXPLORE-PLAN 2013 Pilot Testing Window Closing and Materials Return and 2) SBAC Volunteer Pilot to be Replaced by Practice Test.

### **1) EXPLORE-PLAN 2013 Pilot Testing Window Closing and Materials Return**

Thank you for participating in the 2013 EXPLORE-PLAN pilot project. The Michigan Department of Education and ACT were very pleased to be able to provide Michigan schools with this opportunity. Below are a few closing reminders to ensure the final steps in this pilot run smoothly.

LAST DAY TO TEST FOR THE 2013 EXPLORE-PLAN PILOT: **Friday, April 12, 2013**

LAST DAY TO SHIP MATERIALS: **Monday, April 15, 2013\***

\*If materials are not shipped by April 15<sup>th</sup>, the cost of expedited shipping to ensure arrival by Thursday, April 19, 2013 will be the responsibility of the district.

*Any EXPLORE-PLAN materials not RECEIVED by ACT by April 19<sup>th</sup>, will NOT be paid for by the pilot project* and will be the financial responsibility of the district. Answer documents received after April 19th will not be included in district or state aggregate reports. Questions regarding materials return should be directed to ACT Customer Service at 877-789-2925 or [CustomerServices@act.org](mailto:CustomerServices@act.org).

### **Reporting**

Many districts that completed their 2013 EXPLORE-PLAN pilot testing early in the testing window have already received their EXPLORE-PLAN student and school reports. These results are shipped to schools approximately 10 business days after the answer documents are received by ACT. ACT will begin generating district reports shortly after the final materials return date. Reports will be delivered within approximately 10 business days from that date.

### **EXPLORE-PLAN Questions**

For questions related to administering EXPLORE-PLAN (all pilot testing must be complete on or before 4/12), returning materials, or billing, please contact ACT Customer Services at 877-789-2925 or [CustomerServices@act.org](mailto:CustomerServices@act.org).

For all other questions related to the EXPLORE/PLAN pilot, please contact BAA at 877-560-8378, option 7, or [baa@michigan.gov](mailto:baa@michigan.gov).

### **2) SBAC "Volunteer Pilot" to be Replaced by Practice Test**

As you are aware, many Michigan schools are participating in the Spring 2013 Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) pilot as part of Michigan's "scientific sample," and many other schools not selected as part of the scientific sample have volunteered to participate in the "Volunteer Pilot" scheduled to begin on April 9<sup>th</sup>. The Volunteer Pilot was intended to give students the opportunity to experience items that look and function like the items found in the Scientific Pilot; however, would not have contained performance tasks or followed a test blueprint equivalent to an operational test. The SBAC heard an overwhelming demand from educators, parents, and the public for a more complete and more broadly available "Practice Test" in lieu of the Volunteer Pilot. In response to the needs expressed, the SBAC has elected to replace the Volunteer Pilot with such a Practice Test. The Practice Test will allow educators to construct simulated assessment events for their students and the Practice Test will not require a unique username and password; therefore, schools and districts will have the flexibility with the Practice Test to allow for professional development activities and for informational sessions with parents, policymakers, and other interested stakeholders.

The change from a Volunteer Pilot to Practice Test DOES NOT impact current testing in support of the Scientific Pilot; all schools signed up for the Scientific Pilot will continue to test as scheduled. However, all schools, including those that participated in the Scientific Pilot will have access to the Practice Test.

This modification of the SBAC plan will result in a delay of the availability of a test for those schools that already volunteered to participate in the Volunteer Pilot. The Practice Test will be available beginning Wednesday, May 29, 2013 (two days after the end of the Scientific Pilot). We understand that for many schools, this later start date may be too close to the end of the school year to allow an early opportunity to engage with the newly-released Practice Test; however, we hope the benefits of a full Practice Test (outlined below), and the fact that the Practice Test will remain open throughout the summer months and the next school year, will mitigate the delay.

The Practice Test will:

- Be available for grades 3–8 and 11 in both English language arts and mathematics;
- Follow the planned Smarter Balanced test blueprints, making the Practice Test experience very similar to the assessment experience in 2014-15;
- Afford teachers, administrators, and parents access to items planned and designed for the Smarter Balanced assessment;
- Allow students to access the tests over the summer, with the Practice Test available right up to rollout of the operational assessment;
- Use the full array of item types including performance tasks; and
- Make available versions that demonstrate several accommodations\*:
  - Text-to-speech,
  - Item-level pop-up Spanish glossaries for construct irrelevant terms (math tests only),
  - Braille, and
  - American Sign Language (ASL).

*\*Accommodated forms will be released in phases across the listed grade/content combinations:*

- *Phase 1, May 29: All accommodations for non-performance task items (with the exception of ASL) in grades 3, 7, and 11 math; and grades 4, 7, and 11 ELA*
- *Phase 2 (TBD): All accommodations for non-performance task items (with the exception of ASL) in grades 4, 5, 6, and 8 math; and grades 3, 5, 6, and 8 ELA*
- *Phase 3 (TBD): ASL accommodation in all grades and content areas*

## **Next Steps**

Additional information about the Practice Test availability and access will be provided as we approach the May 29<sup>th</sup> Practice Test rollout date.

## **Questions?**

For assessment questions, please email [baa@michigan.gov](mailto:baa@michigan.gov).

For accountability questions, please email [MDE-Accountability@michigan.gov](mailto:MDE-Accountability@michigan.gov).

For phone assistance with assessment or accountability issues, call 877-560-8378 and select the appropriate menu option. Please remember that spring ELPA questions should be directed to Questar (menu option 5); however, ELPA Screener questions should be directed to BAA (menu option 7).