



# Wyoming Department of Education

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## MEMORANDUM NO. 2011-110

**TO:** District Superintendents  
Assessment Coordinators  
Junior High/Middle School Principals  
Junior High/Middle School Counselors  
High School Principals  
High School Counselors

**FROM:** Sean Moore, Interim Director Standards, Assessment, Learning & Teaching

**DATE:** August 22, 2011

**SUBJECT:** 9<sup>th</sup> Grade ACT EXPLORE Test

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### Urgent: Time Sensitive Information

During the 2011 legislative session, the Wyoming Legislature passed Senate File 70, also known as Enrolled ACT 90, the “Wyoming Accountability in Education Act.” This law requires the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) to establish baseline college readiness benchmarks in grades 8 and 11 during school year 2011-12. The information will be combined with other assessments to compute a “combined school score” to measure school improvement from year to year.

In response to the requirements outlined in this new law, all districts are now required to administer the ACT EXPLORE assessment to **all 9<sup>th</sup> grade** students in Wyoming. The purpose of moving this test from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade is to assess student performance based on a full year of 8<sup>th</sup> grade content. Furthermore, while this test could have been administered at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, counselors across the state indicated that 8<sup>th</sup> grade students are already tested very heavily and expressed a strong interest in having the ACT EXPLORE test moved to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The assessment will be administered in the fall, and schools will have a window from early September until the end of October to administer the test. During this window, schools can set their individual test dates for students as they see fit. Funding for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade assessment will be covered by the WDE.

**PLEASE NOTE:** If your district would like to continue providing the ACT EXPLORE test to your 8<sup>th</sup> grade students (in addition to the required 9<sup>th</sup> grade test), the WDE will cover *all costs* associated with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade administration for the 2011-2012 school year. Future funding for this optional 8<sup>th</sup> grade administration is undetermined at this time.

On Wednesday, August 24, 2011, 2:00 pm the WDE will conduct a WEN presentation that will cover **state ordering information and testing logistics for both the required 9<sup>th</sup> grade test and the optional 8<sup>th</sup> grade test**. This session will be recorded and accessible via the WEN server, however, please reserve your WEN room as soon as possible.

As a reminder, **ACT allows for a one or two day test administration only**. The Department suggests that you discuss these options with your school or district administration, assessment staff, and faculty well in advance of your EXPLORE testing.

District Superintendents  
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The **Student Information and other non-cognitive components of the test should be administered first**, followed by the academic tests (English, mathematics, reading, and science). Because of the time required to complete the non-cognitive portions of EXPLORE, some schools prefer to administer EXPLORE over a two-day period. In this case, **the non-cognitive portions should be administered on day one and the academic tests on day two.** If your schedule allows, this option may increase the students' focus and minimize testing fatigue. However, care must be taken to ensure that students have the correct answer folder on day two. **In no case should the cognitive portion of EXPLORE be administered prior to the non-cognitive portion.** Doing so increases the risk of students filling in random bubbles on the test sections if they did not complete a section of the test or otherwise making extraneous marks that can affect scoring.

The graph below indicates test items and time needed for each test.

ENGLISH TEST (40 items, 30 minutes testing time)		READING TEST (30 items, 30 minutes testing time)	
CONTENT/SKILLS COVERED BY TEST	NUMBER OF ITEMS	CONTENT/SKILLS COVERED BY TEST	NUMBER OF ITEMS
Usage/Mechanics	25	Prose Fiction	10
Punctuation	6	Humanities	10
Grammar and Usage	8	Social Sciences	10
Sentence Structure	11	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>
Rhetorical Skills	15		
Strategy	5	SCIENCE TEST (28 items, 30 minutes testing time)	
Organization	5	CONTENT/SKILLS COVERED BY TEST	NUMBER OF ITEMS
Style	5	Data Representation	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	Research Summaries	10
		Conflicting Viewpoints	6
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>
MATHEMATICS TEST (30 items, 30 minutes testing time)		Note: The content areas (Earth/Space Sciences, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences) all are represented in the test; there are three units in the life sciences, two units in the physical sciences, and one unit in the Earth/Space sciences.	
CONTENT/SKILLS COVERED BY TEST	NUMBER OF ITEMS	Total number of EXPLORE test items = 128	
Pre-Algebra	10	Total testing time for four tests = 120 minutes	
Elementary Algebra	9		
Geometry	7		
Statistics/Probability	4		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>		

**Other Key EXPLORE Components**

- Needs Assessment—provides information about a student's perceived needs in seven areas.
- Plans and Background Information—addresses questions about high school coursework plans in five subject areas, educational and career plans after high school, and other demographic information.
- Exploring Career Options—helps students explore personally relevant career options based on UNIACT Interest Inventory results.
- Coursework Planner—provides guidelines to help students develop a high school coursework plan based on their EXPLORE test results and future educational and career plans.

If you have any questions about the ACT EXPLORE Test, or **would like to sign up for periodic email updates**, please contact Sean Moore at [sean.moore@wyo.gov](mailto:sean.moore@wyo.gov).