



# Wyoming Department of Education

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## MEMORANDUM NO. 2012-018

**TO:** School District Superintendents  
Curriculum Coordinators  
Assessment Coordinators  
Principals  
District PAWS Coordinators  
Building PAWS Coordinators  
Special Education Director

**FROM:** Paul Williams, Transitional Director  
Assessment Division

**DATE:** February 6, 2012

**SUBJECT:** 2012 Statewide Assessment of Student Writing Skills Pilot

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### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Per Senate File 70/Enrolled Act 90 (SF 70/EA 90), Section 5(b), the Wyoming State Legislature requires:

- “ . . . the state board shall through the state superintendent and the department, develop an authentic statewide assessment of student writing skills which is:
- (i) Limited to one (1) writing prompt in school year 2011-2012, the initial year of implementation statewide as a pilot assessment;
  - (ii) Based upon research and encourages rigor in the classroom;
  - (iii) Developed outside of and not as a part of the requirements under 20 U.S.C. 6311;
  - (iv) Administered separate and at different times from the statewide summative assessment in other subject areas;
  - (v) Fully implemented in the 2012-2013 school year and each year thereafter.”

On November 21, 2011, the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) sent Memorandum No. 2011-150 to Superintendents indicating a writing pilot test for the spring of 2012 was planned, as required in the above cited legislation, but that we could not confirm the pilot would actually take place unless a contract with our new vendor was signed in a timely fashion.

The contract is now complete, and WDE can confirm that a writing pilot test will be conducted in May, 2012.

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WDE is trying to balance the pilot writing test design between current law (SF 70/EA 90) and pending accountability legislation. Therefore, the writing pilot test will conform to current legislation in terms of the grades to be tested (3-8 and 11), but it will also anticipate some changes to the writing assessment as contained in the pending accountability legislation - specifically the reduction in testing time for writing.

WDE is aware of your anticipation of this information and appreciates your patience and support as we have worked diligently to finalize the details. The specifics for the pilot are as follows:

1. The test administration window for the pilot is **May 8-10, 2012**.
2. The writing pilot will be administered to grades 3-8 and 11.
3. The pilot will consist of one (1) writing prompt per student.
4. The duration of the test should be approximately one and one-half (1.5) hours student working time and must be completed in one session. WDE recommends that approximately 30 minutes be spent on the draft response and 1 hour spent on the final response. The working time recommended above approximates the time specified in the pending accountability legislation.
5. The prompts that students will write to will be aligned to the current (2008) Wyoming standards and benchmarks.
6. Included as part of the pilot will be a student writing checklist. This checklist is based upon the PAWS writing scoring guide and is intended to be an easily accessible resource for the students during the test. The full PAWS writing scoring guide **will not** be included in the testing booklets this year. The student writing will be scored just as it always has been in the past, using the PAWS writing scoring guide posted on the WDE website. It is the intention of the Department to have this checklist available to teachers and students well ahead of the testing window.
7. There will **not** be a PAWS-ALT writing pilot.
8. There will be no scores reported based on the results of this pilot.
9. The following students will not be included (tested) in the pilot:
  - students on a 504 plan or IEP;
  - EL students;

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- students placed in an institution, or private school;
- distance education students;
- students requiring Special Test Forms (Braille, Large Print, Audio).

Administration and training information will be found on the WDE website as it is completed. Districts will receive notification from WDE, including a calendar of important dates, the administration manual and other important resources as they become available. WDE will work with Educational Testing Service (ETS) to develop and disseminate all pilot information as quickly as possible.

Once again we appreciate your support and patience. If you or your staff have questions, please contact Jude Serrano at [jude.serrano@wyo.gov](mailto:jude.serrano@wyo.gov) or 307-777-8568. To further review SF 70/EA 90, please go to <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/2011/Enroll/SF0070.pdf>.

Thank you.

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