



SPECIAL REPORT: TEST SCORES

Schools test students to measure progress, decide on curriculum

**The Gazette**  
More than 4 million students — in Iowa and across the country — spend time taking the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and Iowa Tests of Educational Development every school year.

The tests are used to help measure the progress of individuals and groups of students over time. The collective scores also can be used to provide information about instructional decisions.

What's on the test? That depends on the grade level.

The kindergarten through second-grade ITBS include vocabulary, word analysis, reading comprehension, listening, language and math. Older students

in this group are also tested on social studies. The science test begins in second grade and con-

tinues through high school.

Third- through eighth-grade ITBS cover vocabulary, reading

comprehension, language, math, social studies and reference materials. Some grade levels are tested on word analysis and listening.

ITED exams assess ninth-through 12th-grade students on vocabulary, reading comprehension, language, spelling, math, social studies and science.

School districts across the state differ on when to administer the tests. The Cedar Rapids district switched back to spring testing this past school year, ending a trend of more than 10 years of fall testing.

The decision to switch back to the spring testing date allows the district to begin the school year with plans that incorporate the test data.

Waterloo and Des Moines districts both test in the spring.

Iowa City, College Community, Linn-Mar and many other Eastern Iowa districts test each fall.

# Making THE grade



## Minority report Schools change how they report race, ethnicity

By Meredith Hines-Dochterman  
The Gazette

A change in how schools report student information has the potential to affect the reporting of annual test scores.

The 2009-10 school year was the first year that the race and ethnicity of Iowa's students were reported in a new way, as required by a 2007 federal mandate to better classify racial groups.

Before that, students, or their parents, chose one of five categories to identify their race/ethnicity — American Indian/Alaska Native; Asian/Pacific Islander; African American/Black; Hispanic/Latino; or White.

Now there are seven categories: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; African American/Black; Hispanic/Latino; White; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; or Two or More.

All states are now required to ask students whether they are Hispanic or not Hispanic, and then whether they are one or more of the seven categories.

Jay Pennington of the Iowa Department of Education says the change has resulted in some population shifts.



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Based on the new race and ethnicity categories, an increase of 1.09 percent of Hispanic students was recorded in 2009. At the same time, the percentage of

white students decreased 2.25 percent. Those students likely moved into the two or more, or Hispanic categories.

All other categories, except

the two new groups, decreased. "Certainly we see different trends pre-coding and then after

► RACE, PAGE 6F



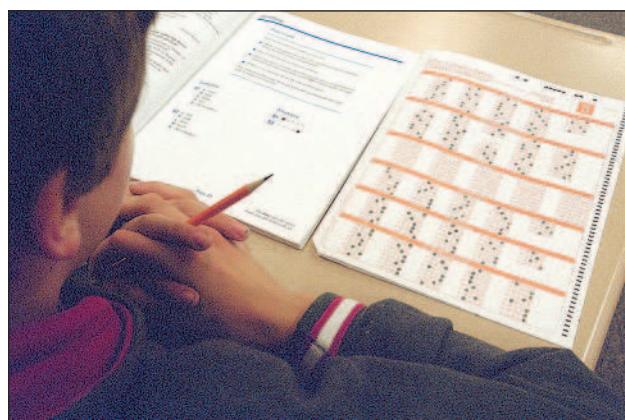
## Goodbye, ITBS, ITED; Hello, 'Iowa Assessments'

By Meredith Hines-Dochterman  
The Gazette

IOWA CITY — The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and Iowa Tests of Educational Development will have several changes in the 2011-12 school year — beginning with the name.

"We are going out this year with new versions of our standardized tests, which will be referred to as the Iowa Assessments," said Stephen Dunbar, director of the Iowa Testing Programs

in the University of Iowa College of Education. "We won't be using the term ITBS and ITED



Cliff Jette/The Gazette

A student listens to instructions from his teacher before starting the spelling section of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills at Central City Middle School in Central City in 2004.

as we refer to these." The name change reflects how the assessments have evolved

throughout the years, and the information and messages Iowa Testing Programs wants educators, parents and teachers to take from the results.

"In the context of all that, we felt it was appropriate at this point in time to signal some of that with a new name for the program," Dunbar said.

But what does it mean? The tests won't look any different. Students

will still need a No. 2 pencil to fill in the bubble. The content, though, has changed. The last time the program had a new version was the 2001-02 school year — a lag that is longer than normal, but made sense as the state was developing what is now the Iowa Core.

Then, in July 2010, Iowa's State Board of

► TESTS, PAGE 6F

### Core total district averages

Cedar Rapids (4, 8, 11 grades)				Iowa City (4, 8, 11 grades)			
	'10	'09	'08		'10	'09	'08
Elementary schools	52	36	36	Elementary schools	55	66	68
Middle schools	49	49	52	Junior high schools	73	77	81
High schools	81	81	82	High schools	92	91	90

Cedar Rapids Metro Catholic (4, 8, 11 grades)				Linn-Mar (4, 8, 11 grades)			
	'10	'09	'08		'10	'09	'08
Elementary schools	98	96	93	Elementary schools	94	88	89
Middle schools	97	92	96	Middle schools	88	82	76
High school	97	97	98	High school	94	97	95

College Community (4, 8, 11 grades)				Marion (4, 8, 11 grades)			
	'10	'09	'08		'10	'09	'08
Elementary schools	48	73	83	Elementary school	66	66	39
Middle school	63	68	63	Middle school	57	57	48
High school	77	77	53	High school	83	69	75

Sources: Local school districts and ITBS/ITED reports Gazette graphic

### How does your school compare?

This table shows the percentile ranking of core total scores on the ITBS and ITED based on the 2010 test results for fourth, eighth and 11th grades when compared with other schools in Iowa. Core total results include reading, language and math. For example: Fourth-grade students at Westfield Elementary School in Marion scored better in core areas than 99 percent of the schools in Iowa.

Cedar Rapids Metro High School is not included because it does not give all of the tests necessary to receive a core total score.

\*NAs at Garner is because that school opened in 2010. NA for Taylor due to closure following 2008 flood.

#### Key for schools

- ES = elementary MS = middle
- JH = junior high HS = high
- Orange square = 2010 rankings
- Yellow square = 2009 and 2008 rankings
- Green square = Cedar Rapids Metro Catholic Schools
- Blue square = Cedar Rapids Schools
- Grey square = College Community Schools
- White square = Linn-Mar Schools
- Red square = Marion Schools
- Light blue square = Iowa City Schools

#### Core total comparison

School	2010	2009	2008
St. Pius X ES	99	99	99
Westfield ES	99	97	85
Wickham ES	99	97	94
Echo Hill ES	99	91	88
Bowman Woods ES	99	90	99
St. Joseph ES	99	83	95
St. Joseph MS	98	98	99
Regis MS	98	92	97
All Saints ES	98	91	79
St. Matthew ES	98	82	73
Horn ES	97	99	92
Xavier HS	97	97	98
West HS	97	92	92
Indian Creek ES	96	94	99
St. Ludmila ES	95	96	91
Lincoln ES	95	94	99
Weber ES	94	99	99
Linn-Mar HS	94	97	95
Oak Ridge MS	94	87	74
Coolidge ES	93	91	87
City HS	92	95	95
Longfellow ES	90	55	90
Kennedy HS	87	94	89
Nixon ES	87	87	71
Viola Gibson ES	87	78	82
LaSalle MS	86	88	84
Washington HS	86	77	92
North Central JH	85	80	83
Wilkins ES	83	78	71
Marion HS	83	69	75
Jackson ES	81	84	92
Linn Groves ES	79	59	39
Prairie Point HS	78	77	54
Shimek ES	77	98	99
Excelsior MS	77	77	77
Harding MS	77	74	75
Hoover ES	75	93	99
Northwest JH	75	90	91
Novak ES	73	81	90
Arthur ES	71	85	48
Franklin MS	66	67	68
Francis Marion ES	66	66	39
Lemme ES	65	91	70
Truman ES	65	68	37
Taft MS	65	61	70
Prairie MS	64	68	64
Jefferson HS	63	51	52
Erskine ES	63	48	64
South East JH	58	54	66
Pierce ES	57	60	88
Vernon MS	57	57	48
Prairie Crest ES	51	75	78
Prairie View ES	51	57	70
Kenwood ES	51	16	32
Prairie Ridge ES	50	89	94
Grant Wood ES	50	16	17
Hiawatha ES	48	40	12
Penn ES	46	57	24
Prairie Heights ES	45	71	84
Polk ES	45	16	7
Lucas ES	43	41	45
Van Allen ES	42	72	24
Hills ES	42	5	52
McKinley MS	41	35	48
Cleveland ES	41	20	34
Garner ES*	40	NA	NA
Mann ES	40	4	64
Wright ES	39	24	45
Garfield ES	39	17	35
Coralville Central ES	33	87	66
Van Buren ES	28	16	9
Harrison ES	21	11	7
Wilson ES	20	32	17
Madison ES	19	10	23
Roosevelt MS	17	16	18
Wilson MS	13	13	11
Roosevelt ES	12	41	25
Hoover ES	10	11	6
Johnson ES	10	7	2
Grant Wood ES	6	13	38
Taylor ES*	3	1	NA
Tate HS	2	1	2
Twain ES	2	1	5
Kirkwood ES	1	7	32

Sources: Local school districts and ITBS/ITED reports Gazette graphic



Photos.com/thinkstock







DISTRICT: EDGEWOOD-COLESBURG (565 students) ACT: 21.4
41% free/reduced lunch, <1% minority, 8% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: ENGLISH VALLEYS (534 students) ACT: 23.2
40% free/reduced lunch, 1% minority, 13% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: HIGHLAND (849 students) ACT: 19.8 (2011)
23% free/reduced lunch, 8% minority, 14% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: H-L-V (351 students) ACT: 23.5
25% free/reduced lunch, <1% minority, 11% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: INDEPENDENCE (1,327 students) ACT: NA
38% free/reduced lunch, 1% minority, 17% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

NOTE: Errors in compiling results for 2010-11 year tests resulted in the lack of comparable results for Independence. Grade equivalents weren't calculated for final corrected results. Detailed proficiency levels were also not available for corrected results.

DISTRICT: IOWA VALLEY (608 students) ACT: 20.4
32% free/reduced lunch, 5% minority, 12% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: JESUP (901 students) ACT: NA
26% free/reduced lunch, 7% minority, 10% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: LISBON (630 students) ACT: 22.6
24% free/reduced lunch, 4% minority, 7% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

Editor's Note: Information from the Olin Consolidated and North Cedar districts was not available by deadline for this report.

HOW TO READ THE CHARTS

Grade equivalents: Grade level at which a district's or building's students performed on the ITBS, as compared with peers in Iowa and nationwide.
Not proficient: Percentage of students scoring in the 40th percentile nationally

or below.
Proficient: Percentage of students scoring in the 41st to 99th percentile.
Intermediate (percentage of students who scored in the 41st to 89th percentile nationally). High (90th to 99th percentile).

Free and reduced-price meal program, minorities, special education: Schools with fewer than 30 students who qualify do not report proficiencies, so specific children could not be identified

DISTRICT: LONE TREE (415 students) ACT: 22.3
30% free/reduced lunch, 5% minority, 12% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: MAQUOKETA VALLEY (707 students) ACT: 22.0
36% free/reduced lunch, 2% minority, 10% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: MIDLAND (465 students) ACT: NA
46% free/reduced lunch, 4% minority, 12% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: MID-PRAIRIE (1,280 students) ACT: 22.1
29% free/reduced lunch, 8% minority, 15% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: MONTICELLO (1,133 students) ACT: 22.2
30% free/reduced lunch, 3% minority, 12% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: MOUNT VERNON (1,284 students) ACT: 24.2
16% free/reduced lunch, 5% minority, 8% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: NORTH-LINN (654 students) ACT: 22.6
20% free/reduced lunch, <1% minority, 10% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: SOLON (1,374 students) ACT: 23.4
8% free/reduced lunch, 4% minority, 6% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: SPRINGVILLE (383 students) ACT: 19.9
20% free/reduced lunch, 2% minority, 9% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: TIPTON (900 students) ACT: 22.3
29% free/reduced lunch, 1% minority, 13% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: VINTON-SHELLSBURG (1,793 students) ACT: 22.6
35% free/reduced lunch, 6% minority, 16% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: WASHINGTON (1,766 students) ACT: 21.7
41% free/reduced lunch, 21% minority, 13% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: WEST BRANCH (847 students) ACT: 22.4
25% free/reduced lunch, 10% minority, 11% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: WEST DELAWARE (1,582 students) ACT: 22.0
28% free/reduced lunch, 3% minority, 12% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.

DISTRICT: WILLIAMSBURG (1,129 students) ACT: 23.2
26% free/reduced lunch, 10% minority, 11% special education

Table with columns: GRADE EQUIVALENTS (Iowa, National), NOT PROFICIENT, PROFICIENT (Intermediate, High). Rows for 4th, 8th, 11th grade in Reading, Math, Science.



# Computers could replace pencils for Iowa tests

Software would adapt tests as students progress

By Patrick Hogan  
The Gazette

Education standards in Iowa traditionally are measured through the filling in of bubbles on a computer-read answer sheet with a No. 2 pencil.

By 2014, that pencil could be a thing of a past.

As part of Iowa's failed attempt to win a Race to the Top grant from the U.S. Department of Education last year, the state joined the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, a group of states seeking to develop a computer-based standardized test in line with the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Iowa did not win its grant, but the 29-state consortium was one of two proposed tests that received four-year, \$176 million Race to the Top funding. If the test is adopted by the state upon its completion, it would replace the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills as the state's primary standardized test.

So why does Iowa need a new test?

While Iowa Department of Education Director Jason Glass says the current test has a long and prestigious history, he has several criticisms of its current incarnation: It's taken on pencil and paper, it is multiple-choice only and the questions are not aligned to the state's academic standards.

The proposed SMARTER Balanced test differs from the ITBS in almost all those areas.

The test will be delivered entirely by computers using an adaptive item bank system, similar to those used by the Graduate Management Admis-



The Gazette

Third grader Mikaela Stevenson looks over the reading comprehension portion of her testing booklet while taking the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in 2005 at Alburnett Elementary.

sions Test for business schools. All students get a slightly different test as the software measures the test-taker's progress and delivers the ideal question to test their understanding.

The current plan also would allow more than just multiple choice answers, allowing fill-in responses and essays that would be judged by an artificial intelligence system. Questions with answers more complex than A, B, C or D let educators get a better handle on a student's critical thinking skills.

Computer-based tests also tend to be shorter in length and are graded instantaneously as the student is taking them. SMARTER Balanced also plans to release interim tests that teachers can give throughout the year to track students' progress before the end-of-year assessment.

One area of concern is that the standards that the SMARTER Balanced test is aligned with, the Common Core standards, have not yet been fully implemented across Iowa's school districts. The state's current standards, the Iowa Core, are being folded into the Common Core, according to Jay Pennington, a bureau chief at

the Department of Education.

"There's a lot of work that needs to happen there in terms of readiness and focusing and making sure people understand not only what the core is but also what the expectations are," he said.

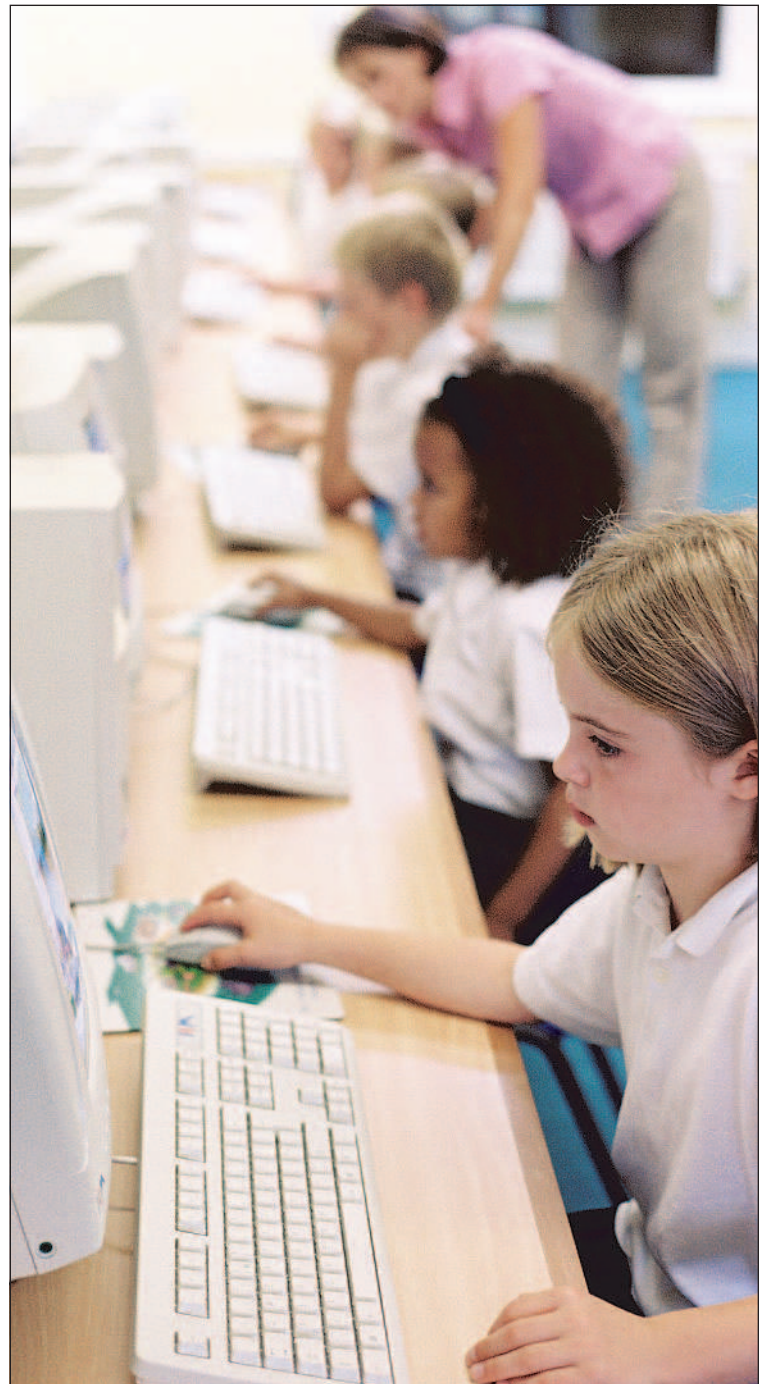
More rigorous standards are a large part of the state's current push to reform education, but it's hard to know if standards are working or not if there's no system in place to measure them.

SMARTER Balanced still is under development, so it's not known whether it will be adopted upon its projected completion.

But the state is actively seeking a larger role in the consortium, and recently stepped up from advisory to voting membership in the group.

"The truth is, we have to look at what the final product is," Glass said. "This gives Iowa a seat at the table as this is developed and improved. We'll look at this in 2013 and 2014, and we'll look at this in comparison to ITBS or others and choose what's the right test for Iowa."

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## Tests/Reports allow tracking

► FROM PAGE 1F

Education adopted the Common Core State Standards.

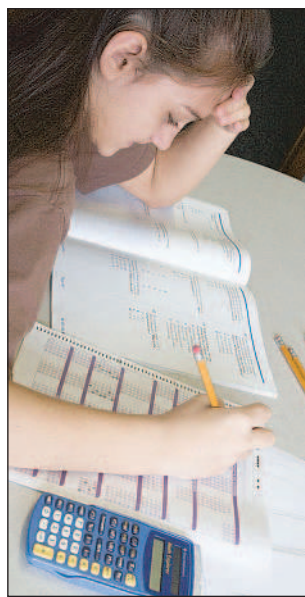
"We're in a constant development cycle, but with those signs on the horizon, we said 'Let's watch,'" said

Timothy Ansley of Iowa Testing Programs.

The math and English language arts assessments were written using the Common Core State Standards. The science assessment, as well as other tests in the program, were created with the Iowa Core as the target.

At this time, the Common Core State Standards only address English language arts and math. No Child Left Behind's adequate yearly progress benchmarks focus on math, language arts and science.

"We've taken more of a systems approach from kindergarten through 12th grade, with more of an emphasis on tracking growth, and giving messages along the way to help students and educators prepare for the next step," said Catherine Welch of Iowa Testing Programs. "A lot of our assessments alignment and standards-based interpretation will be part of the emphasis in some of the reports that will be



Cliff Jette/The Gazette

Sixth grader Katelyn Smith works on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills during a makeup testing session at East Buchanan Middle School in Winthrop in 2008.

provided."

Those reports have been available in the past, but have been fine-tuned to give more detail related to the new standards. This information can be used to evaluate and inform instruction.

In addition to evaluating their performance against the Common Core State Standards, the new assessments also give students the opportunity to track College and Career Readiness.

"That is a new reporting feature," Dunbar said. "From grade 6 on, because of research that we've done to connect performance on the (as-

sessments) with ACT, we'll actually be able to determine whether a student at a given point is what we call 'on track' to be ready for college."

Students will be able to obtain an indicator in the four areas ACT, the college testing group, has established for college benchmarks — English, reading, math and science — and know if they are on track for the ACT exam in high school.

In addition to a new name, new content and new reports, Iowa Testing Programs continues to explore a new way to deliver the tests. Online tests have been piloted for end-of-course exams, but Welch said more research needs to be done before the Iowa Assessments can be more than a paper exam.

The online version of the Iowa Assessment is expected to be introduced in the fall of 2013.

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## Testing tips for parents

Parents can do several things to help children prepare adequately for tests (whether teacher-made or standardized), provide support and create a positive test-taking experience.

- The best way to prepare for tests is to study, know the work, and take the right courses.
- Make sure that your child is in school during the

## Race/System more personal

► FROM PAGE 1F

the new coding," Pennington said.

It's that difference that has some educators wondering what impact the change could have on test scores.

No Child Left Behind's adequate yearly progress report tracks student progress in several subgroups, including race and ethnicity. Schools must have 40 students in a subgroup, with 30 students testing, in order for test scores to be recorded. The rule applies to all grade levels. Schools that don't meet the requirement don't have to report the scores.

Now that multiracial students can choose the two or more category, other subgroups will see their numbers fall — possibly to the point where schools aren't required to report test scores for those groups.

Schools face sanctions on the performance of students in one ethnic subgroup.

"We may see a drop, but it's not an unfair advantage," Pennington said. "The whole purpose is to better identify our racial groups."

Federal lawmakers said the new system will better reflect the country's growing diversity. For those who are of mixed race, it's a little more personal.

"It's very important, particularly to school-age children, that they're able to embrace all of their heritage because that's who they are," said Susan

Graham, executive director of Project RACE.

RACE, a California-based group that advocates for multiracial students.

Graham said she understands concerns that new categories will shift academic focus, but said the country's multiracial population, while grow-

ing, isn't large enough to influence subgroups.

According to Iowa Testing Programs at the University of Iowa, which develops Iowa's standardized tests, only 700 of Iowa's 30,000 students who took the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and Iowa Tests of Educational Development in the 2010-11 school year used the two or more category.

That's 2 percent of the state's students.

"We have no idea how that distributes by district, but the effect is minimal," said Catherine Welch of Iowa Testing Programs.

"It comes down to self identification," Graham said. "We don't call our children 'other.' They don't want to check 'other.' We don't want them to check 'other.' Our children have that right, and now they have that opportunity, to embrace all aspects of their heritage."

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in school.

- Get explanations if there are major differences between standardized test scores and school grades.
- Encourage your child to study over time rather than "cram" the night before.
- Encourage your child to listen carefully to all test-taking directions and to ask questions about any directions that are unclear.

- See that your child gets his/her regular amount of sleep before the tests and has plenty of rest.
- Make sure that your child eats his/her usual breakfast on the day of the test. Hunger can detract from a good test performance.
- Encourage your child to do his/her best.

Source: American School Counselor Association