

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The below frequently asked questions and answers are intended to assist our operational CBT ELA district leaders with guidance regarding the spring 2019 CBT ELA administration.

Q: What is the current status of the Questar/Nextera Systems and CBT?

A: We have worked extensively with Questar to address server capacity issues that occurred on Tuesday, April 2, 2019. The Commissioner has released a press statement which can be found at <http://www.nysed.gov/news/2019/2019-computer-based-ela-state-assessments-resume-tomorrow-select-grades>. The statement includes details about the cause of the issues and corrective action taken by Questar to resolve the issues.

Q: Can we only tests grades 5 or 8 on Thursday April 4, 2019?

A: The Department is asking that schools, that want to continue testing on Thursday, April 4, 2019 and Friday, April 5, 2019, only test grades 5 and 8 on CBT out of an abundance of caution in order to ensure that the system works properly. Please note the following:

- If a school building does not have grades 5 and/or 8, the school may choose to test another grade level, but we ask that schools not test more than two grade levels with CBT without informing the Department.
- If a school would like to stagger testing times tomorrow for students taking the CBT exams, the Department supports such arrangements.
- If another grade level in the school has completed its first test session on Tuesday and the school would like to have them complete Session 2 tomorrow, the school may do so.

If a school needs to complete CBT testing in more than grades 5 and 8, on April 4 due to special circumstances, the school administrator should please contact CBTSupport@nysed.gov or the Office of State Assessment at 518-474-5902 prior to testing to explain the special circumstances. We are trying to be flexible and understand there may be special circumstances in your school.

Q: Why are we suggesting that districts stagger the testing?

A: The Department is suggesting staggering of grade-level testing out of an abundance of caution. Our goal is that students in New York State have a successful CBT experience. We want to limit the number of simultaneous test takers on Thursday and Friday. The purpose is to allow Questar and the Department to closely monitor the CBT system's functioning while gradually increasing load conditions.

Q: Can a school switch to paper-based tests for the math administration?

A: Yes.

The principal or school administrator should:

1. email examrequest@nysed.gov
2. Include the school name, BEDS code, grade level, subject, and quantities needed, and
3. Be sure to contact your [Regional Information Center \(RIC\)](#) or large city scan center for student answer sheets.

Q: Can a school switch to paper-based tests for the remainder of the ELA administration?

A: Yes. Please follow the steps provided in the following FAQ to contact the Office of State Assessment to make arrangements.

Q: Can Questar produce the number of paper tests that districts may require to make this switch? If this is true, then will the testing window be extended to account for the number of people who may want paper examinations?

A: NYSED is working closely with Questar to make sure all school district needs are met, including those for paper tests due to a district decision to revert to paper testing. NYSED will continue to monitor the needs of districts and schools and be flexible, if needed, regarding the CBT test administration. If your school was scheduled for CBT in a grade level, then that school will adhere to the CBT testing schedule, even if that school chooses to revert to paper testing during CBT ELA.

The principal or school administrator should:

1. email examrequest@nysed.gov Include the school name, BEDS code, grade level, subject, and quantities needed, and
2. Be sure to contact your Regional Information Center (RIC) or large city scan center for student answer sheets

If necessary, to support schools reverting to paper from CBT, the Department will consider extending the window for paper administrations through Friday, April 12, 2019.

Q: Can students who have “Completed” session 1 on computer complete Session 2 on paper?

A: Students who have completed Session 1 on computer can take Session 2 on paper if the school has chosen to switch to paper. Questar already has a process in place to combine a CBT and PBT test session for a student in New York State.

Q: Will adjustments be made to the scoring windows in light of the extended administration period?

A: Yes. Specific information will be forthcoming. We will work with scoring consortia in the state to find out what issues they are facing and work collaboratively to find solutions, if needed.

Q: Are there concerns about the validity of the test results due to the administration issues?

A: No. Of the 93,100 total students that started tests on Tuesday, 93 percent of, or 86,500, students that started testing sessions successfully completed and submitted their tests that day. Questar and the Department are working with schools to process the completed but not yet submitted tests for the remaining students. All students will be able to complete both test sessions and no students will be asked to retake any testing sessions.

Q: When does the testing administration window for ELA CBT testing close?

A: We have extended the testing window through Friday, April 12, 2019.

Q: What is the Department doing to ensure that the remainder of ELA and the Mathematics CBT test administrations go smoothly?

A: Questar developed a corrective action plan, which was reviewed and validated by both ETS and Microsoft at the Department’s direction. Specifically, to resolve the issues identified, Questar has done the following on April 2-3, 2019:

- Significantly increased memory for its database servers
- Enhanced the capabilities of its databases
- Significantly increased the number of student transactions the servers can process at one time
- Removed all non-essential servers from the production environment

The Department is working closely with Questar to continuously monitor and seek additional improvements that can be made for students in NYS to successfully complete the spring 2019 CBT ELA administration.

Other questions

If school personnel have other questions, they should please keep an eye on (<https://cbtsupport.nysed.gov/hc/en-us/categories/201173603-Grades-3-8-ELA-and-Math-Computer-Based-Testing>) where the Department will continue to provide updates. Schools can also email the school's RIC or CBTSupport@nysed.gov for more information.

- The NYSED CBT Team works directly with the Regional Information Centers (RICS) and Big 5 City School Districts as our first-tier support in the field for CBT.
- The NYSED CBT Team will continue to keep operational CBT ELA schools informed via the CBT ELA listserv:
 - In the fall, schools were asked to verify CBT Technology Readiness and indicate additional users in their schools to be added to the operational CBT listservs.

It is important to note that after NYSED, Questar and our NYS schools complete the CBT ELA administration; a thorough comparability analysis will be done to review the student results. NYSED completed the same analysis last year and will continue to ensure that no school is unfairly penalized for participating in the CBT ELA administration.