

It Takes More Than Words To "Leave No Child Behind"

It's hard to quibble with the noble mission to leave no child behind or even with the passive version, NCLB. Nevertheless, whatever the phrase we cannot allow ourselves to get bogged down in the rhetoric, and by so doing defeat the purpose of it. As schools search to find a way to measure "adequate yearly progress" as described in the No Child Left Behind Act, they may be tempted to replace their current useful tests (naturally, we hope it is the CTP 4) with another by their state. They should be careful that in the process they are not throwing out the child with the bath water, and leaving everything behind.

For years, many high achieving public suburban and independent schools have used the CTP (currently CTP 4) published by ERB. They chose the test because it aligned with their curriculum at each grade or helped to guide the development of a challenging curriculum and standards of achievement that made sense for their students. In response to the recent NCLB Act, many states are in the process of adopting their own test through which they will measure and monitor the annual progress of students. These state tests are a throwback to the ones our member schools abandoned because they did not go far enough in distinguishing between the achievement levels of their students. Now they are faced with the prospect of having to administer a state test on top of the CTP 4, admittedly a better test

in providing useful information about growth and achievement of students. The issue for many comes down to class time: can they afford the time from instruction to administer the CTP 4 along with another test battery that the state may require? Our response: can you afford not to? If the goal is to measure student achievement and diagnose learning needs meaningfully in time to provide helpful interventions to students, then schools cannot afford to skip the CTP 4.

We encourage all of our member schools to remember what the CTP has meant for your students and teachers. The test was developed to provide important information about students in order to better meet their needs, and to provide a "reality check" on curriculum. It is precisely because the CTP 4 raises the bar for all students that it offers quality information about their learning. Similarly, the comparison of your students' scores with suburban public and independent school norms establishes a meaningful scale to assess their achievement. The expectation of high-level performance measured against a challenging set of questions gives you a reliable gauge of curriculum coverage. In the process, it helps keep teachers focused on their students' achievement across the entire learning spectrum. Moreover, ERB's examination of results on the CTP Reading Comprehension and Mathematics tests compared to New York State's

Continued on page 2

ERB to Discontinue Flagging Non-standard ISEE Score Reports

For several years the issue of flagging students' scores on tests taken under non-standard conditions has been a source of increasing controversy and, more recently, litigation. As a result, in separate actions last summer, the College Board and American College Testing announced their intention to end the practice of flagging non-standard scores as of September 1, 2003, and ERB will likewise stop flagging the ISEE beginning in September.

We need not repeat here all of the arguments made over the years in favor of, or in opposition to, the practice of flagging. At our annual fall conference we featured workshops on the topic, including a College Board-led session on its plans for implementing the change in its testing programs. In addition, we have focused on these issues in discussions with the ERB board of trustees and the ISEE advisory com-

Continued on page 2

Spring 2003

- **It Takes More Than Words To "Leave No Child Behind"**
- **ERB to discontinue Flagging Non-standard ISEE Score Reports**
- **Exploring the Change from Ability Tests to Reasoning Tests**
- **News from ERB**
- **Completing the OSS**

Leave No Child Behind

Continued from page 1

English Language Arts and Mathematics tests in grades 4 and 8 revealed just how valuable the CTP was in predicting students' success in meeting or exceeding state standards (see The Evaluator Summer 2000).

We at ERB believe that the same benefits will be derived by member schools in assessing the yearly progress of their students. More importantly, however, use of the CTP 4 will provide teachers and administrators with important and timely information about any learning deficits in time to make a difference in the education of their students. At a glance our score reports offer feedback on how kids at the high, middle, and low end of achievement in the school are doing compared to national, suburban public, and independent school students. This information is revealed for each subtest and for categories within them as well. On further inspection, and with the help of reference manuals describing scope and sequence and content categories for each subtest, teachers can identify specific areas where individual or groups of students need more instruction or help. This kind of analysis of results of a quality test of knowledge and achievement is the best way to enrich the learning of all students and assure that no one is left behind.

Slogans are by definition pithy, and "No Child Left Behind" fits the bill. ERB and its member schools have a long history of going beyond catchy phrases. We provide tests that assess learning of important tasks, content and skills. That's why ERB is synonymous with "quality assessment for quality schools," and backs it up with quality information and service.

ERB to Discontinue Flagging Non-standard ISEE Score Reports

Continued from page 1

mittee. At the end of January, ERB wrote all member heads of school and directors of admission to inform them that ERB will end the practice of flagging non-standard ISEE score reports, effective September 1, 2003. This decision is consistent with an earlier decision to discontinue the practice of flagging on CTP 4 score reports, effective September, 2002.

In the past three years, the percentages of total ISEE tests administered as non-standard are, for successive years, 1.91, 2.13, and 2.16 percent. Clearly, non-standard reports with a flag make up a very small, and relatively stable, percentage of all ISEE test takers.

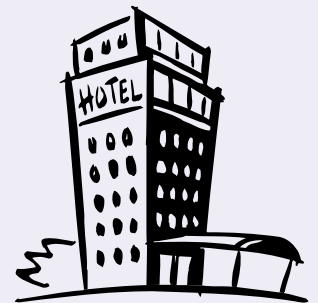
As our members know, approval for accommodations call for the parent to submit a professionally prepared, current diagnostic evaluation for ERB review prior to registration for a non-standard administration. Under our new policy, we will continue this practice for each non-standard testing request, making provision for only those accommodations explicitly noted in the appropriate documentation and received by the student in school.

Another issue we have investigated is the extent to which the standard time limits of the test restricts the number of students who complete the test. So-called "power tests" are designed to make time an important variable in scoring, but the ISEE is not designed to be a speeded or power test. Consequently, most students with no reported special needs comfortably complete the various tests in the ISEE within the allotted amount of time. For example, in 2001-02, 97% of all the independent school candidates taking the ISEE finished the Verbal Reasoning test; 93%, Reading Comprehension; 96%, Quantitative Reasoning; and 95%, Mathematics. Based on these data, the time limits in the standard administration of the ISEE seem appropriate for the students.

An important part of ERB's mission has always been to help admission staff determine qualified candidates for their schools. We are committed to making the process fair for all test takers, standard and non-standard alike.

SAVE THE DATE!

This year's conference
dates are October 22-25, 2003.



Exploring the Change from Ability Tests to Reasoning Tests

ERB staff and test consultants in the field have received many inquiries about the difference between the CTP III ability tests and the new CTP 4 reasoning tests that replace them. Some of the more common questions follow, with brief answers intended to clarify key issues in the change.

Q. What's the reason for changing the name of these tests?

A. The name change from "ability" to "reasoning" represents an important movement away from the view that ability, or aptitude, represents a set of fixed, innate, and unchangeable intellectual characteristics of an individual, characteristics important in responding successfully to classroom instruction, but essentially unteachable. The current view is that students' understanding of the logic of abstract verbal and mathematical relationships and their skill in applying this understanding in unfamiliar contexts, typically measured by these tests, rely on a set of higher-order skills that can, in fact, be taught.

Q. Are we measuring a new process/skill/knowledge or has the language just changed?

A. The skills and knowledge tested remain much the same but the focus of the tests has been narrowed. Verbal reasoning tests concentrate on three types of reasoning: analytical, analogical and logical. The quantitative reasoning tests are designed to measure students' capacity to reason in mathematics quantitatively by making comparisons, formulating extensions or generalizations of mathematical concepts, and analyzing mathematical situations.

Q. Can CTP 4 reasoning scores be compared with achievement measures on the test?

A. Yes, but not in the same way that CTP III achievement tests were compared to ability tests. Reasoning test scores do not predict performance on achievement measures, but these scores are strongly correlated to achievement test scores. A new optional score report, Achievement/Reasoning Consistency Analysis report, identifies for each student whether achievement scores are higher than, consistent with, or lower than the reasoning test to which it is related. Those accustomed to looking for two-stanine differences between scores can still do so, but they need to recognize that is a general rule-of-thumb and not as reliable a measure as the Achievement/Reasoning Consistency Analysis.

Q. How do the higher-order thinking skills measured in the reasoning tests compare with the questions formerly grouped together in CTP III to yield a higher-order thinking skills score?

A. The higher order skills score in CTP III reports was not based on a separate set of test questions, but was a composite score derived by selecting individual test questions from various CTP III sub-tests. The new design of the reasoning tests is intended to provide a direct, rather than a derived measure of higher-order thinking skills independent of the other tests in CTP 4.

Q. What are the advantages to the new reasoning tests?

A. One of the most important advantages is that an item analysis is now available for the reasoning test. An analysis of this score report is important in determining the areas of critical thinking that are strengths and those which present difficulties for students. This information is useful in develop-

ing intervention for individual students and in reviewing the curriculum to insure the inclusion of critical thinking activities.

Q. How can I explain the change from the concept of ability to one of reasoning to parents?

A. One of the best ways to explain the change to parents may be to explain the difference in the school's use of the information. An ability score was considered an indication of a student's potential, apart from programs or instruction. It was used as a comparison to answer the question: "Does the child's achievement match his/her potential?" The reasoning score provides insight into the critical thinking strengths or needs of the student and can be used to ask: "What critical thinking skills can be taught to this student that would improve his/her achievement?" In short, there is a two-way interaction between the reasoning and achievement tests, not a one-way cause and effect relationship.

Q. Parents frequently ask what kind of questions are on reasoning tests? What can I say?

A. Because the test is a secure assessment, you may not relate any of the items from CTP 4 or CTP III, however ERB has developed the CTP 4 Content Standards Manual which has description of each subtest. Sample items for reasoning tests, as well as achievement tests and constructed response are included and may be shared with parents.

Your understanding of the reasoning tests and their use is an important part of the analysis process. Should you have further questions about reasoning or other aspects of CTP 4, we invite you to e-mail Dr. Sid Barish, the Executive Director of Achievement Testing Programs, sbarish@erbttest.org.

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News From ERB...

News from WrAP

Wrap users have been embracing the changes that strengthened the program: new levels, new modes of discourse, more detailed administration manuals, word-processed anchor papers and a Definition of Terms for the rubric. Now users are finding another change that makes their score reports even more useful. New summary reports have graphic representations comparing norm populations at the 25th, 50th and 75th percentiles. These graphic comparisons

make differences clear to teachers, as well as providing another view for administrator reporting.

WrAP is now offering a new teaching tool called Poster Rubrics. These 14" x 20" laminated poster signs have become welcome additions to WrAP users. With an introductory price of \$15 per set of 6 posters, each represents a different category of the rubric. They make excellent classroom displays where students and teachers can refer to them routinely. The posters may be ordered on the WrAP Additional Services order form, or a fax request may be made to WrAP Operations at 919-682-5775, attention Ruth Porterfield. Fax orders should include the school name, address, phone number, contact person and school ERB customer code.

Tips for Completing the Order for Scoring Services

ERB's Operations Office has offered two suggestions for avoiding common problems in completing the OSS.

- *Please be sure that both sides of each OSS are completed.*
- *To receive a calculation for local norms (class, school, or district) to compare to national, public, suburban, or independent norms, you must request one or more local norms on the Item Analysis and the Individual Instructional Summary.*

If you need help to complete the OSS, consult pages 15-19 of the 2002-03 Catalog or call the CTP 4 Operations Office in Princeton, N.J. (866-683-2335) for assistance.