



Reference: 20181030-7949
File no.: 12/2/11/5/2
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Curriculum GET Minute: DCG 0020/2018

To: Deputy Directors-General, Chief Directors, Directors, Heads: Curriculum Support, Circuit Managers, Deputy Chief Education Specialists, FET Coordinators, Senior Phase Subject Advisers, eLearning Advisers and Principals of all public schools offering Grade 8

Subject: Grade 8 diagnostic assessment tool for Languages, Mathematics and Natural Sciences

1. The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) developed a diagnostic assessment tool for Grade 8 in Languages, Mathematics and Natural Sciences in 2016.
2. We are proud to announce that this diagnostic tool has now been digitised to reduce the administrative load.
3. This notice serves to inform schools to prepare for the online diagnostic assessment from 28 January to 08 February 2019. Should a school need an extended period, the principal is requested to consult with the Head: Curriculum Support in the relevant district.
4. There are no time limitations attached to the completion of the assessment as it is important to get a baseline overview per learner. However, it is advised that principals manage the process and use a guideline of 50 marks per hour.
5. The outcome of the per question analysis provides a baseline of the level and competency of each learner in Mathematics, Languages and Natural Sciences when entering Grade 8.

6. The aim of this tool is to:
 - increase learner participation rates in Mathematics and Physical Sciences in the FET band;
 - help teachers to know the abilities of their learners and to be able to use differentiated teaching in support of enhanced learning for every learner; and
 - close the possible gaps for learners in Grades 8 and 9 and provide further enrichment for those learners performing at a higher level.
7. A dedicated service provider conducted orientation from 12–26 November 2018 in each district. Orientation sessions focussed on how to administer and conduct these online tests. The suggested timeline is indicated in **Annexure A**.
8. The service provider will also render online support during the weeks that these tests are administered.
9. For further support to implementation we included a list of frequently asked questions with possible answers. See **Annexure B**.
10. The WCED is aware that many schools found the insights gained from this assessment helpful in providing learners with differentiated support to deal with possible gaps that they may experience in the related subjects. Schools are applauded for their efforts to gain the most out of the assessment.
11. Schools who experience IT problems during January and those who opt to write the paper-based format can download the tests from <http://resources.wcedgrade8diagnostic.co.za/>. This site will additionally offer an instructional video on how to administer the test. Schools are encouraged to report any technical challenges before closure on 14 December 2018 to the IT Helpdesk.
12. Principals are requested to ensure that the information contained in this minute is conveyed to all Mathematics, Languages and Natural Sciences teachers.

SIGNED: PAD BEETS

DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL: CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT

DATE: 2018-12-10



Administering the online version:

- Orientation of school principals and district officials: 12–26 November 2018.
- Ownership and internal strategizing: 26 November–12 December 2018.
- Schools report any IT challenges to Helpdesk as soon as possible.
- Schools report readiness to district offices: 22 January 2019.
- All Grade 8 learners write the three assessments: 28 January–08 February 2019.
- Schools analyse data: 15 February 2019.
- Schools forward intervention plans to district offices: 22 February 2019.
- Districts analyse data and support schools.

Administering the paper-based version:

- Orientation of school principals and district officials: 12–26 November 2018.
- Ownership and internal strategizing: 26 November–12 December 2018.
- Schools download 2019 version of tests from link provided and per unique password: 03 December 2018.
- Schools print question papers: 05 December 2018–23 January 2019.
- Schools report readiness to districts: 09 January 2019.
- All Grade 8 learners write the three assessments: 23–31 January 2019.
- Teachers mark tests. To be completed by: Friday, 08 February 2019.
- Schools capture results electronically on excel spreadsheet by: Friday, 15 February.
- Schools email spreadsheet and intervention plans to district offices.
- Districts compile and analyse data and forward to Head Office.



**Frequently Asked Questions:
Grade 8 Digitised Diagnostic Assessment Tool**

NO.	FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
1.	How will schools with large numbers of Grade 8 learners manage to complete these assessments with a limited number of computers in schools?	Schools will have to manage the current situation and look into equipping computer labs with extra computers on an annual basis. Alternatively arrange with neighbouring schools to assist by using their computer labs.
2.	Will there be support during the writing sessions for newly registered Grade 8 learners who are not familiar with the use of computers?	Support should be arranged internally by schools. Responses to assessment questions are either by ticking or highlighting. Consider the help of senior learners with excellent IT skills.
3.	Can the diagnostic assessment be done with Grade 7 learners instead of waiting for until they are at high school?	The main aim of assessing three subjects at Grade 8 level is to measure content knowledge of learners entering high school. Learners come from a variety of feeder schools which may cause complications.
4.	What will happen if an internet interruption occurs during the assessment?	The program saves each response automatically. Once the internet connectivity has been restored, the learner will log in and continue.
5.	How can schools ensure reliable results?	Principals and teachers should explain to learners that the assessment is not about performance but to determine gaps that will inform teachers on how to support them.
6.	Are teachers allowed to support learners who struggle with the administrative side of the assessment?	Yes, teachers may assist these learners.
7.	What happens when a feeder school (school where a learner comes from) is not	Select “ other ”.

	in the listed primary schools of the district?	
8.	How will the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) assure that schools follow their school intervention programmes?	Subject advisers will monitor and support during school visits.
9.	Will schools with large numbers of Grade 8 learners be allowed to extend their writing period with a few days?	Yes, schools may extend the window period of writing these assessments based on their specific needs, but in consultation with the district office.
10.	Will learners who completed these assessments be able to inform their peers about the content?	Yes it is possible. Administrators at schools should inform learners that is not about a result, but rather to determine individual backlogs and addressing these backlogs.
11.	Are calculators allowed while completing these tests?	Learners should not be allowed to use their calculators and cellphones during the assessment sessions, but they are allowed to use sheets of papers to work out and/or draft what they need to write. Such papers should be collected from them after each session of the assessment.
12.	Will teachers be paid for marking the assessments where schools do the paper-based version?	No, unfortunately not.
13.	Is the 2019 version of the assessments different from the previous years' versions?	Yes, therefore principals will have to download the 2019 version from the website: http://resources.wcedgrade8diagnostic.co.za/
14.	Can the assessments be done on a tablet and/or smart phone?	Yes, it is possible. Just bear in mind that access to the assessment is required via an internet browser and not an application. The size of the screen might be challenging when using a smart phone.