



Mike DeWine, Governor
Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction

DATE: DATE
TO: Interested Parties and Stakeholders
FROM: Paolo DeMaria, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: ELIMINATION OF GEOMETRY TEST – REQUEST FOR COMMENT

Recent changes in state law impact high school math testing requirements for students including the elimination of the Geometry test as a graduation requirement. These changes have other consequences including the possibility of increasing the total number of math tests required for thousands of students. The law directs the Department to seek a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education to use Algebra I as the primary assessment of high school mathematics.

BACKGROUND

Previously, Ohio has received multiple federal waivers allowing advanced middle school students taking high school courses to take the test aligned with their course rather than double testing with the grade-level test. For example, if an eighth-grade student is taking Algebra I, that student would only take the Algebra I test and not the eighth-grade test. This waiver has applied to tens of thousands of students across subject areas and grade levels as low as sixth grade. The table summarizes this math data for 2017-18.

Reducing high school tests. The idea of reducing tests has been voiced frequently by stakeholders. The Superintendent’s Advisory Committee on Assessments report from June 2017 recommended reducing tests to the federal minimum requirements.

Superintendent DeMaria addressed this idea in a corresponding set of recommendations that called for the elimination of the English Language Arts (ELA) I test. Eliminating a math test is a much more difficult endeavor because of the number of middle school students utilizing the waiver and the flexibility that the state’s Integrated Math assessments provide. Ohio provides an Algebra I/Geometry sequence and an Integrated Math I and II sequence of assessments. Each sequence covers the same standards in total, so students taking both tests in a sequence are considered to have taken equivalent tests, and the federal government allowed the sequences to meet testing requirements. Removing one test from the sequence breaks that alignment and eliminates Integrated Math from the accepted federal accountability testing approval.

Table with 3 columns: Grade Level, End-of-Course Exam, Tests Taken. Rows include data for grades 6, 7, and 8 across various math exams like Algebra I, Geometry, and Integrated Math I/II.

Budget bill changes. Ohio law recently changed testing requirements for students in the classes of 2023 and beyond, moving from seven EOC tests to five. That legislation calls for Ohio to seek a federal waiver, as necessary, to use the Algebra I test as the primary [emphasis added] assessment of high school mathematics. State law1 further indicates that denial of such a waiver would result in the inclusion of a Geometry assessment

1 ORC 3301.0712(B)(2)(b).

for accountability purposes, but not for graduation. These provisions have significant implications for middle school students and students participating in Integrated Math courses.

Federal waiver. Department staff had an initial discussion with the U.S. Department of Education (USED). Federal law does not prevent Ohio from eliminating the state Geometry test and using Algebra I as the high school math test for meeting federal requirements. However, such a change has substantial implications and requires decisions regarding amending Ohio's double-testing waiver and how to design the waiver request pursuant to the budget bill requirements. Additionally, it was confirmed that without a geometry test, Integrated Math tests would no longer be acceptable to meet federal accountability requirements. Students taking the Integrated Math I test (more than 10,000 in 2017-18) would also have to take the Algebra I test.

Next steps. Ohio can use Algebra I as its sole federal high school test, but in doing so, would not maintain its expansive flexibility to allow middle school students to take the most relevant, aligned test. In some cases, making this change without middle school flexibility could lead to MORE state testing for thousands of students. In order to meet the statutory requirement to seek a federal waiver, Ohio must decide how to design the waiver request and how to address the needs of advanced middle school students.

THREE OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. **Administer only the Algebra I (and Integrated Math I) test, eliminate the Geometry and Integrated Mathematics II tests, and forgo all middle school double-testing waivers.**

Strengths:

- The total number of state tests decreases, although testing increases for thousands of advanced students and students using Integrated Math for graduation.
- This would not require a separate new federal waiver, although it would likely require amending the ESSA plan and current expanded double testing waiver.

Challenges:

- Seventh- and eighth-grade students enrolled in high school courses would also take grade-level tests and double-test with an exam that is not aligned with the course they are enrolled in. In 2017-18, this represented more than 28,000 students (23% of eighth graders) and several thousand more in other grades and subjects.
- Students taking the Integrated Math I test (approximately 10,000 in 2017-18) would have to double-test by also taking the Algebra I test.
- Schools would be held accountable for students taking tests that are not aligned to the relevant courses, which is counter to the standards-based accountability system.

2. **Request an amendment to the previously approved waiver that specifies Algebra I as the *primary* high school test for accountability, while maintaining the expanded middle school waiver for all math tests.** This would result in maintaining Geometry as a test for accountability (but not graduation purposes).

Strengths:

- This would permit all advanced middle school students to continue to take the relevant math EOC tests without also requiring an additional grade-level test.
- Students taking Integrated Math tests to meet graduation requirements would not also be required to take the Algebra I test.
- Districts would have flexibility to use the Integrated Math sequence, supporting local control in selecting the math curriculum that best meets the needs of their students.

Challenges:

- Keeping the Algebra I, Geometry and Integrated Math tests does not reduce the overall total number of state math tests required. It only reduces the total number of math tests required for graduation.

3. **Pursue Algebra I/eighth grade math ESSA waiver but amend the expanded waiver to remove all other math tests.** This would eliminate the Geometry test but would address the needs of more than 28,000 eighth grade students taking Algebra I. This would avoid some, but not all, double-testing scenarios. *The relevant ACT/SAT data would be used in high school report cards.*

Strengths:

- The Geometry test is eliminated for all students in the class of 2023 and beyond.
- Accelerated eighth-grade students in Algebra I would take the Algebra I test and the ACT or SAT in high school but would not have to take the eighth-grade test.

Challenges:

- Eliminating Geometry would result in seventh- and eighth-grade students in that course double-testing with their grade-level test (over 3,000 students in 2017-18).
- Seventh graders taking the Algebra I test would need to take the eighth-grade mathematics test in grade 8 regardless of the course in which they are enrolled. Those students would also need to take the ACT or SAT in high school.
- Students taking the Integrated Math sequence (approximately 10,000 in 2017-18) could take the Integrated Math I test to meet graduation requirements but would have to double-test by also taking the Algebra I test.
- USED has indicated that it is possible for middle school Algebra I scores to be banked for high school accountability; however, those students would need to double-test with their respective grade levels.

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS

I would like to hear from interested stakeholders about how to structure the waiver request to address middle school flexibility and Integrated Math. Please take the time to formulate your thoughts and provide us input by November 1. You can email your input to Chris Woolard at Christopher.woolard@education.ohio.gov. We look forward to receiving your comments.