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Dive Deeper into Assessment Development

Top 10 Tips to Remember When Creating Test Plans and Blueprints

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A solid test plan and detailed blueprint are the foundation that can lead to a quality assessment. Review the ten tips below to help you with the test plan and blueprint creation process.

A **test plan** outlines the subjects and grade levels that will be assessed, as well as the standards and other documents that will be utilized during test creation.

A **blueprint** contains the specifics for each individual test; it includes information like which standards will be tested and how many items will be included to assess each standard, among other pieces of information.

A strong assessment development process should include the tips in this article so you can be successful during test planning and blueprint creation. As you begin this process, it's important to identify the human resources your district has and evaluate their level of expertise to determine whether or not training, additional support, or both will be needed.

3 Test Plan Tips

1. **Create a solid test plan.**

   Know what subjects and grade levels will be assessed. Determine the set of standards, curriculum documents, etc. that will be used to create your test. These standards and objectives are what students will be assessed on and they need to be clearly noted.

2. **Establish the rules of the test administration.**

   How much time will be allowed for students to complete the test? When will the test be administered? Will the test be administered using paper/pencil forms, online, or both?

3. **Determine the item types.**

   Identify the item types (multiple choice, multiple select, short response, extended response, etc.) that will be included on the test.

7 Blueprint Tips

1. **Identify the standards/objectives to assess. For ELA, identify passage genre and number of items per passage.**
   - List the standards/objectives that will be assessed down the left margin of the blueprint chart.
   - For ELA, list the passage genre and any other passage details (length, readability, etc.), and the number of items per passage.

2. **Clarify the part of the standard/objective to be assessed.**

   Identify the *specific* part of the standard/objective you plan to assess. For example, a standard may read "Create equations in two or more variables to represent relationships between quantities; graph equations on coordinate axes with labels and scales." Obviously, trying to create an item to test all of that at once would not be appropriate. So you would unpack the standard into a testable segment: "Create equations in two or more variables to represent relationships between quantities."

3. **Assign the cognitive complexity.**

   Indicate the cognitive complexity level (DOK, Blooms, etc.) for each standard/objective included on the blueprint.

4. **Assign the number of items per standard/objective.**

   Determine how many items will assess each standard/objective. Remember, you need to consider the total number of items on your test. Also, consider the weighting or importance of certain standards over others. You may not be able to create items for every standard if you need to stay within a preset length for the test.

5. **Assign an item type.**

   Indicate the item type that will be used to assess each standard/objective. If two or more item types will be used to assess a standard/objective, be sure to indicate this on the blueprint.

6. **Review the blueprint against the test plan.**

   Compare the blueprint, total items, standards/objectives to be included, etc. to the test plan in order to make sure that it is in line.

7. **Maintain the blueprint.**

   After administration and prior to the next test administration window, review the blueprint against district materials to make sure no revisions need to be made to the blueprint.

At the completion of these steps, you should be ready to begin creating or selecting content. Prior to doing so, you might consider creating or selecting model items.

These items will dictate the style and format you want all items to follow. Doing so will help maintain a consistent look and feel across the test(s). These models can also act as a guide for assessing the standards and objectives indicated on the blueprint.

Sample Blueprint

The following illustrates a sample blueprint. The callouts on the blueprint correspond to the tips discussed above (not all tips are illustrated):

Standard Reference	Standard Text	② Item Focus	Projected DOK	No. of Items	Item Type	Passage Type	Passage Description/ Title
① RI.2.1	Ask and answer such questions as *who, what, where, when, why,* and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.	Part A: Ask/Answer a question about who, what, where, when, why or how	③ DOK 2	④ 2	⑤ MC	Informational passage	Science concept-specific unique animal
RI.2.1	Ask and answer such questions as *who, what, where, when, why,* and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.	Part B: Use evidence from the text to show how you arrived at the answer in Part A	DOK 3	1	ER		
RI.2.2	Identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text.	main topic of text	DOK 2	1	SR		

How can Scantron help?

Scantron has an extensive track record of providing assessment services to help thousands of customers succeed in their assessment programs. We were one of the first partners to align our existing item banks to the Common Core State Standards—and we were one of the first to provide item and assessment banks designed *from the ground up* to fully support those standards. We've helped districts with workshops and consulting on a variety of assessment topics and content development processes, as well as working with customers to provide high-quality content aligned to their chosen standards. We've validated educator assessment efforts and demonstrated positive impact to student learning with research studies ranging from determining growth targets to predictive validity studies.

One critical challenge is to develop an assessment plan that fulfills all of the needs of a district's educators. This process might include developing a plan for custom assessments that includes creating an assessment blueprint and effective test items to accurately measure student achievement. It might also include aligning district-created items to a particular set of national or state standards. Scantron can develop these deliverables using the same proven assessment development process we follow to create our own item banks and assessments—or you can choose to incorporate existing Scantron materials into your plan. If you want to play a more

active role in assessment creation, Scantron can assist with a variety of professional development activities that will instruct educators in how to create test blueprints and develop assessment items. Last, if linking district test results to state test results or performing other studies is important, Scantron's psychometric and research team can help.

Another key element is providing support to build district team capacity and inform Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Scantron can develop your assessment elements—*and* we can provide consulting and workshops on a variety of topics, including:

- Blueprint development
- Item development plan
- Item writing and review
- Bias and sensitivity review
- Test form creation and delivery
- Statistical analysis and interpretation of results
- Custom research projects

Whatever the assessment assistance you need, Scantron has the products, tools, and expertise to help you ensure that you have the right program for your students. Our comprehensive suite of assessment services helps you make the most out of your assessment development process. Whether you want to do it yourself with in-house experts and just need a little support or whether you want a partner to guide you through the process, Scantron can meet you where you are and help get you to where you want to be.

Contact Us:
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Don't just take our word for it! Some quotes from our clients:

"We began by having Scantron use our blueprints to build test items.
We have learned so much from [Scantron's] expertise and guidance.
The research provided by their psychometricians has been key to our success!"
Mary Lou Caldarera,
Supervisor of Assessment, Calcasieu Parish Public Schools, LA

"[Scantron] not only helped write, edit, and review test items
for our core content areas, but they've helped
orchestrate the field testing and the psychometric review
of these items so that they pass a single parameter model.

Thea Andrade,
Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction,
Phoenix Union High School District, AZ