



**State of Vermont  
 Vermont Department of Education  
 120 State Street  
 Montpelier, VT 05620-2501**

## **NECAP Online Writing Pilot – Coming in March 2012**

The VT Department of Education is pleased to announce an opportunity for schools to participate in the NECAP Online Writing Pilot at grades 8 and 11. Following a very successful first year, Measured Progress is expanding the program to provide additional schools with the chance to participate. Here at the Department of Education, we feel that moving toward online testing will provide greater fidelity between writing in the classroom and writing for assessment. The pilot test is comprised of Writing Released Items, and will be used to confirm your school’s ability to participate in future NECAP Operational Online Writing assessments. The primary purpose of the pilot is to test your school’s ability to administer an online assessment, therefore scores from student work will not be returned. However, if your students do take part in the pilot this spring, your school will be able to assess 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders in the fall, 2012 NECAP Writing Assessment.

The table below outlines the plan for the number of schools piloting the test each year, as well as the number of schools able to qualify for operational testing the following year. While it is our intent to bring more schools online operationally each year, this will be impacted both by schools’ ability to participate successfully during piloting, and by state funding considerations.

	<b>2011: Completed</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Pilot Test in Spring (2012: March 26-30, April 2-6)</b>	<i>70 schools were selected to administer online writing pilot</i>	125 additional schools (20 at grade 8, 15 at grade 11) selected to administer online writing pilot	125 additional schools (20 at grade 8, 15 at grade 11) selected to administer online writing pilot
<b>Operational Assessment in Fall</b>	<i>Schools that successfully administered the online writing pilot in Spring of 2011 gave the test operationally in the Fall of 2011.</i>	Schools that successfully administered the online writing pilot in Spring of 2011 or 2012 may give test operationally in the Fall of 2012	Schools that successfully administered the online writing pilot in Spring of 2011, 2012 or 2013 may give test operationally in the Fall of 2013.

If you are interested in having your school participate in the Online Writing Pilot, please review the “NECAP Online Writing Pilot: Checklist for Selecting Participating Schools,” as well as the “Technical Requirements for School-based Technology” document. There are certain technical requirements that must be met in order to be considered for participation.

If, after reading the requirements, you believe your school would be eligible for inclusion in the pilot, please forward the information on the following form via fax (802-828-6563) to [MaryAnn.Minardo@state.vt.us](mailto:MaryAnn.Minardo@state.vt.us) by February 16, 2012.

Thank you for your interest in taking this exciting next step with NECAP!



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**The deadline for returning this form is February 16, 2012.**

Vermont Department of Education  
Research, Standards and Assessment Team

**NECAP *ONLINE* WRITING PILOT**

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Technology Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Test Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade(s) Testing:  Grade 8       Grade 11

Estimated Number of Students Testing: Grade 8 \_\_\_\_\_ Grade 11 \_\_\_\_\_

For questions please contact Mary Ann Minardo at (802) 828-5410 or via email  
[MaryAnn.Minardo@state.vt.us](mailto:MaryAnn.Minardo@state.vt.us).

Please fax form by February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012 to Mary Ann Minardo via fax at (802) 828-6563.



## NECAP Online Writing Pilot: Checklist for Selecting Participating Schools

The New England Common Assessment Program is pleased to offer schools an opportunity to participate in the online delivery of the NECAP Grades 8 and 11 Writing Assessment. This initiative includes a pilot assessment in the spring of 2012 and, for schools that successfully complete the pilot (either spring 2011 or spring 2012), an operational assessment in the fall of 2012. Rather than testing the writing ability of your students, the goal of the pilot assessment is to confirm a school's capability to deliver an online assessment both in terms of technological infrastructure and administrative capacity. Therefore, no scores from student work in this pilot assessment will be returned.

This document includes a checklist of technological requirements and administrative capabilities that best ensure successful computer-based testing. Please use this checklist to evaluate your school's interest and ability to participate in the pilot assessment.

✓	Checklist Item for Schools	Notes
	We have a single point of contact that can manage correspondence with NECAP and Measured Progress representatives.	A single school representative for correspondence allows schools to keep track of all matters regarding this initiative.
	We will have a technology coordinator present in our school on days when computer-based tests are delivered.	Having a technology coordinator present during the assessment will help a great deal with diagnosing system performance issues at the schools.
	Our technology coordinator or other school representative will participate in training events to prepare for computer-based test administration, and that representative will train all staff on the technological aspects of administration for our school.	Technical Coordinators and principals will be invited to a webinar in early March. In-person training for Test Administrators will be offered on March 9, 2012. Topics will include working with data administration (e.g. placing students in online test sessions), managing the test administration interface during a test, reviewing the student test interface, and troubleshooting technical issues during test sessions.
	Our testing administrator or other school representative will participate in training events to prepare for computer-based test administration, and that representative will train all staff on the test administration aspects of administration for our school.	
	We have a number of Technical-Requirement-compliant computers that is equal to or greater than half of the number of students that are eligible for the online writing assessment.	Please refer to the Technical Requirements on the last page of this document.  This quantity of computers allows schools to deliver a test in two contiguous periods on the designated testing day.
	We will have a minimum average of seven students per room in which the computer-based test is delivered.	There is value in regulating the number of rooms for a variety of security and administrative reasons. Accommodations or students with special needs may reduce the average number of students per room at a school, and this can certainly be taken under consideration. However, test coordinators will benefit from limiting the number of test administrators that they would need to assign to administrate tests.

We at NECAP and Measured Progress are excited about the opportunity to provide online assessment. We look forward to collaborating with all participating schools to deliver successful pilot tests in the spring, refine the program based on our collective wisdom, and provide the best possible experience for the operational tests in the fall.



## Best Practices for Computer-Based Testing

As schools are selected for the pilot test and administration draws near, a more detailed and comprehensive list of Best Practices will be distributed. The following is a high-level summary of key technological and administrative guidelines that will allow administrators and technology coordinators to anticipate future actions and policy implementation within their schools.

1. **Reduce traffic on school networks during test sessions.** Any non-assessment high-bandwidth network usage, such as streaming audio/video or online gaming, should be restricted.
2. **Coordinate the testing software with your anti-virus solution.** Some school networks use a centralized anti-virus solution that automatically scans applications. Avoiding these automatic scans of testing software will maximize performance.
3. **Close other applications before opening the testing software.** Closing applications that automatically open with operating systems, such as instant messaging, will provide additional bandwidth for your assessments.
4. **Allow pop-ups on machines that test administrators use.** The software for proctors makes use of pop-up windows. Pop-up blockers should be disabled for administrator machines.
5. **Hard-wire your administrator computers to your networks.** Even if all students are testing wirelessly, a hard-wired connection for the administrator machine will maximize performance.
6. **Adjust student machines with wireless connections in order to avoid hibernation.** Hibernating computers with wireless connections could lead to disconnections from test sessions. Setting wireless computers to avoid hibernation is especially important for a writing assessment because students may have longer periods of inactivity than they would for a set of multiple-choice items.
7. **Assign multiple coordinators or “hall administrators.”** Network issues in one room will normally be concurrent with issues in most or all rooms. Having multiple personnel that have been trained for troubleshooting technological issues and who are not assigned to a specific room, especially during this initial administration, can help tremendously.
8. **Consider the writing process when working with computers.** This final best practice is more about pedagogy than technology. Students learn that writing is a process that includes pre-writing and effective self-editing strategies. In advance of the assessment, teachers should work with their students to identify their own best practices given the technology and time limits that are involved.



## 2012 NECAP Online Testing: Technical Requirements for School-based Technology

Local Network		
<b>Network Connection Specifications</b>	If <b>wired</b> to network (required for each test administrator's computer): Minimum - 100 megabits/second (Mbps) Fast Ethernet TCP/IP If <b>wireless</b> : Minimum - 802.11b; Recommended - 802.11g/n	
<b>Internet Bandwidth</b>	Minimum - 1 Megabyte/second (MBps) with at least 8 Kbps per concurrent user	
<b>Firewall / Proxy</b>	Set to allow connections to *.measuredprogress.org	
<b>Ports</b>	Set to allow connections to ports 80 and 443	
<b>Email</b>	Allow emails from @measuredprogress.org, as the system sends account information via email to new users on behalf of the person creating/updating the account.	
Students' Computers - One for each student testing concurrently		
	Windows®	Macintosh®
<b>Operating System</b>	Windows XP® SP3 or Windows Vista® SP2 Windows 7® Home Premium or greater	OS X® 10.4.11, 10.5.8 or 10.6.4+ <b>Please note:</b> 10.6 Snow Leopard requires that optional component Rosetta® is installed from the OS 10.6 installation disk for Intel-based computers.
<b>RAM</b>	Windows XP SP3: 512 MB or greater, or Windows Vista SP2: 1 GB or greater Windows 7: 1 GB or greater for 32-bit, 2 GB or greater for 64-bit.	10.4 Tiger or 10.5 :Leopard: 512 MB or greater 10.6 Snow Leopard: 1 GB or greater
<b>Processor</b>	Pentium III 1.33 GHz or greater	G4 867 MHz or greater
<b>Flash® Player</b>	Version 10	
<b>Keyboard/Mouse</b>	Standard	
<b>Monitor</b>	32-bit color or greater; 1024 x 768 resolution or greater	
<b>Fonts</b>	Times New Roman, Helvetica, and Verdana	
Principal's and Test Administrators' Computers		
	Windows®	Macintosh®
<b>Operating System</b>	Windows XP® SP3 or Windows Vista® SP2 Windows 7® Home Premium or greater	OS X® 10.4.11, 10.5.8 or 10.6.x
<b>RAM</b>	Windows XP SP3: 512 MB or greater, or Windows Vista SP2: 1 GB or greater Windows 7: 1 GB or greater for 32-bit, 2 GB or greater for 64-bit.	10.4 Tiger or 10.5 :Leopard: 512 MB or greater 10.6 Snow Leopard: 1 GB or greater
<b>Processor</b>	Pentium III 1.33 GHz or greater	G4 867 MHz or greater
<b>Internet Browser</b>	Internet Explorer® 7.x or 8.x Firefox® 3.6	Safari® 3.2.3, Safari 4 Firefox® 3.6
<b>Pop-Up Blocking Software</b>	Must be configured to allow pop-ups from *.measuredprogress.org	
<b>Keyboard/Mouse</b>	Standard	
<b>Monitor</b>	32-bit color or greater; 1024 x 768 resolution or greater	